



Civilization and Transcendence

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His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Replies to a Questionnaire
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RELIGION WITH NO CONCEPTION OF GOD?

Puñña Kāññā: Çréla Prabhupāda, this questionnaire was sent to you by *Bhavan's Journal*, a cultural and religious magazine in Bombay. They are questioning various religious and spiritual leaders, trying to get the answers to some of the important questions that are perplexing people today. So there's a list of questions, and the first is this: "Is the influence of religion over the masses on the wane?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. This is predicted in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* [12.2.1]:

*tataç cānu-dinaà dharmaù
satyaà çaucaà kñamā dayā
kālena balinā räjan
naikñiyaty āyur balaà smātiù*

"In Kali-yuga, this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, there shall be a waning of these qualities: religiosity, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, memory, bodily strength, duration of life, and mercy." These are the human assets—qualities which make a human being distinct from the animals. But these things will decline. There will be almost no mercy, there will be almost no truthfulness, memory will be shortened, duration of life shortened. Similarly, religion will practically vanish. So that means gradually human beings will

descend to the platform of animals.

Especially when there is no religion, human beings are simply animals. This any common man can distinguish—that a dog does not understand what religion is. The dog is also a living being, but he's not interested in what is being discussed here about *Bhagavad-gétā* or *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*. That is the distinction between man and dog: the animal is not interested. So when human beings are becoming uninterested in religion, then they're becoming animals.

And how can there be happiness or peace in animal society? The big leaders want to keep the citizenry as animals, and at the same time they are striving to make a United Nations. How is it possible? United Animals? Is it possible? Society for United Animals. [*Laughter.*] In the science of logic it is said, "Man is a rational animal." So when rationality is missing, one becomes simply an animal. What is the possibility of being a human being?

In human society, whether you are a Christian or a Muhammadan or a Hindu or a Buddhist, it doesn't matter. But there must be some system of religion—that is human society. And human society without religion—animal society. This is the plain fact. Why are people unhappy now? Because they are neglecting religion.

One gentleman has written me that Marx said, "Religion is the opium of the people." That means the Communists are very adamant against God consciousness because they think that religion has spoiled the whole social atmosphere. Religion might have been misused, but that does not mean that religion should be avoided. Real religion should be taken. Simply because religion has not been properly executed by the so-called priests, that does not mean religion should be rejected. If my eye is giving me some kind of trouble on account of a cataract, that doesn't mean my eye should be plucked out. The cataract should be removed. So that is the idea of the Kāñēa consciousness movement—to remove the cataract from people's religious vision.

Generally, modern so-called religious leaders have no conception of God, and yet they are preaching religion. What good is that religion? People are simply being misled. Real religion means God's order: *dharmaà tu sākñād bhagavat-prāētam* [SB 6.3.19]. If your religion has no conception of God, where is the question of religion? Still, without any conception of God, they are professing some religion. How long will it go on artificially? It will deteriorate. That ignorance about God has resulted in the present condition.

Religion means the order of God, just as law means the order of the state. Now, if in your social system there is no state, where is the question of the state's order? You will simply manufacture your own order. Today that is going on in the field of religion: there is no conception of God and therefore no following of God's order.

But we devotees of Kāñēa have a clear conception of God. Here is God: Kāñēa. And He's giving orders. We accept those orders. So it is clear religion. But if there is no conception of God, no order of God, then where is the question of religion? Ask someone in some other religious system what their

conception of the form of God is. Can anyone tell clearly? Nobody can say. But we shall immediately say,

*veëuà kvaëantam aravinda-daläyatäkñāà
barhävataàsam asitāmbudha-sundarāḡgam
kandarpa-koöi-kamanéya-viçeña-çobhaà
govindam ādi-puruñāà tam ahaà bhajāmi*

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept at playing on His flute, whose eyes are like petals of a blooming lotus, whose head is bedecked with a peacock's feather, whose figure of beauty is tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and whose unique loveliness charms millions of Cupids." [Brahma-saḡhitā 5.30]

Immediately, description—"Here is God." Then there is religion. And if there is no conception of God, where is the question of religion? Bogus. That is why religiosity and the other noble human qualities are declining. People have no conception of God, and therefore there is no understanding of religion. As a result, the whole human civilization is declining. And because it is declining, human beings are becoming more and more like animals.

PROGRESSING BEYOND "PROGRESS"

Puñña Kāñña: Question number two?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Puñña Kāñña: "The traditional charge against Hinduism is that it is fatalistic, that it inhibits progress by making people slaves to the belief in the inevitability of what is to happen. How far is this charge true?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: The charge is false. Those who have made that charge do not know what "Hinduism" is. First of all, the Vedic scriptures make no mention of such a thing as "Hinduism." but they do mention *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal and universal religion, and also *varēāçrama-dharma*, the natural organization of human society. That we can find in the Vedic scriptures. So it is a false charge that the Vedic system inhibits the progress of mankind. What is that "progress"? A dog's jumping is progress? [Laughter.] A dog is running here and there on four legs, and you are running on four wheels. Is that progress?

The Vedic system is this: The human being has a certain amount of energy—better energy than the animals', better consciousness—and that energy should be utilized for spiritual advancement. So the whole Vedic system is meant for spiritual advancement. Human energy is employed in a more exalted direction than to compete with the dog.

Consequently, sometimes those who have no idea of religion notice that the Indian saintly persons are not working hard like dogs. Spiritually uncultured

people think the dog race is life. But actual life is spiritual progress. Therefore the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* [1.5.18] says,

*tasyaiva hetoṁ prayateta kovido
na labhyate yad bhramatām upary adhaṁ
tal labhyate duḥkhavad anyataṁ sukhaṁ
kālena sarvatra gabhéra-raḍhasā*

The human being should exert his energy for that thing which he did not get in many, many lives. Through many, many lives the soul has been in the forms of dogs or demigods or cats or birds or insects. There are 8,400,000 material forms. So this transmigration is going on, but in every one of these millions of forms, the business is sense gratification. The dog is busy for sense gratification: "Where is food? Where is shelter? Where is a mate? How to defend?" And the man is also doing the same business, in different ways. So this struggle for existence is going on, life after life. Even a small insect is engaging in the same struggle—*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-māithunam*—eating, sleeping, defending, and mating. Bird, beast, insect, fish—everywhere the same struggle: "Where is food? Where is sex? Where is shelter? How to defend?" So the *çāstra* [scripture] says we have done these things in many, many past lives, and if we don't get out of this struggle for existence, we'll have to do them again in many, many future lives. So these things should be stopped.

Therefore Prahāda Mahārāja advises his friends [*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 7.6.3],

*sukham aindriyakaṁ daityā
deha-yogena dehinām
sarvatra labhyate daivād
yathā duḥkham ayanataṁ*

"My dear friends, material pleasure—which is due simply to this material body—is essentially the same in any body. And just as misery comes without our trying for it, so the happiness we deserve will also come, by higher arrangement." A dog has a material body, and I have a material body. So my sex pleasure and the dog's sex pleasure is the same. Of course, a dog is not afraid of having sex on the street, in front of everyone. We hide it in a nice apartment. That's all. But the activity is the same. There is no difference. Still, people are taking this sex pleasure between a man and woman in a nice decorated apartment as very advanced. But this is not advanced. And yet they are making a dog's race for this "advancement." Prahāda Mahārāja says we are imagining that there are different types of pleasure on account of different types of body, but the pleasure is fundamentally the same. Naturally, according to the different types of body, there are some external differences in the pleasure, but the basic amount and quality of this pleasure has very well defined limitations. That is called destiny. A pig has a certain type of body, and his eatable is stool. This is destined. You cannot change it—"Let the pig eat *halavā*." That is not possible. Because the soul has a

particular type of body, he must eat a particular type of food. Can anyone, any scientist, improve the standard of living of a pig? Is it possible?

[*Laughter.*]

Therefore Prahlāda Mahārāja says that everything about material pleasure is already fixed. The uncivilized men in the jungle are having the same sex pleasure as the so-called civilized men who boast, "Instead of living in that hut made of leaves, we are living in a skyscraper building. This is advancement."

But Vedic civilization says, "No, this is not advancement. Real advancement is self-realization—how much you have realized your relationship with god." Sometimes people misunderstand, thinking that sages who try for self-realization are lazy. In a high court a judge is sitting soberly, apparently doing nothing, and he is getting the highest salary. And another man in the same court—he's working hard all day long, rubber-stamping, and he is getting not even one-tenth of the judge's salary. He's thinking, "I am so busy and working so hard, yet I am not getting a good salary. And this man is just sitting on the bench, and he's getting such a fat salary." The criticism of Hinduism as "inhibiting progress" is like that: it comes out of ignorance. The Vedic civilization is for self-realization. It is meant for the intelligent person, the person who will not just work like an ass but who will try for that thing which he did not achieve in so many other lives—namely, self-realization. For example, we are sometimes labeled "escapists." What is the charge?

Disciple: They say we are escaping from reality.

Créla Prabhupāda: Yes, we are escaping *their* reality. But their reality is a dog's race, and our reality is to advance in self-realization, Kāñṇea consciousness. That is the difference. Therefore the mundane, materialistic workers have been described as *mūḍhas*, asses. Why? Because the ass works very hard for no tangible gain. He carries on his back tons of cloth for the washerman, and the washerman in return gives him a little morsel of grass. Then the ass stands at the washerman's door, eating the grass, while the washerman loads him up again. The ass has no sense to think, "If I get out of the clutches of this washerman, I can get grass anywhere. Why am I carrying so much?"

The mundane workers are like that. They're busy at the office, very busy. If you want to see the fellow, "I am very busy now." [*Laughter.*] So what is the result of your being so busy? "Well, I take two pieces of toast and one cup of tea. That's all." [*Laughter.*] And for this purpose you are so busy?

Or, he is busy all day simply so that in the evening he can look at his account books and say, "Oh, the balance had been one thousand dollars—now it has become two thousand." That is his satisfaction. But still he will have the same two pieces of bread and one cup of tea, even though he has increased his balance from one thousand to two thousand. And still he'll work hard. This is why *karmés* are called *mūḍhas*. They work like asses, without any real aim of life.

But Vedic civilization is different. The accusation implied in the question is not correct. In the Vedic system, people are not lazy. They are very busy

working for a higher purpose. And that busy-ness is so important that Prahāda Mahārāja says, *kaumāra ācaret prājño*: [SB 7.6.1] "Beginning from childhood, one should work for self-realization." One should not lose a second's time. So that is Vedic civilization.

Of course, the materialistic workers—they see, "These men are not working like us, like dogs and asses. So they are escaping."

Yes, escaping your fruitless endeavor.

The Vedic civilization of self-realization begins from the *varēāçrama* system of social organization. *Varnāçramācāravatā puruṇēēa paraṁ puṁān viñēur ārādhyate*: "Everyone should offer up the fruits of his occupational duty to the lotus feet of the Lord Viñēu , or Kāñēa." That is why the Vedic system is called *varēāçrama*—literally, "social organization with a spiritual perspective." The *varēāçrama* system has four social and four spiritual divisions. the social divisions are the *brāhmaēas* [teachers and priests], *kñātriyas* [administrators and military men], *vaiçyas* [farmers and merchants], and *çūdras* [laborers and craftsmen], while the spiritual divisions are the *brahmacārēs* [students], *gāhasthas* [householders], *vānaprasthas* [retirees], and *sannyāsēs* [renunciants]. But the ultimate goal is *viñēur ārādhyate*—the worship of the Supreme Lord, Viñēu , by all. That is the idea.

But the members of the modern so-called civilization do not know of *varēāçrama*. Therefore they have created a society that is simply a dog's race. The dog is running on four legs, and they are running on four wheels. That's all. And they think the four-wheel race is advancement of civilization.

Vedic civilization is different. As Nārada Muni says, *tasyaiva hetou prayateta kovidō na labhyate yad bhramatām upary adhaū*: the learned, astute person will use this life to gain what he has missed in countless prior lives—namely, realization of self and realization of God. Someone may ask, "Then shall we do nothing?" Yes do nothing simply to improve your material position. Whatever material happiness is allotted for you by destiny, you'll get it wherever you are. Take to Kāñēa consciousness. You'll get these other things besides.

"How shall I get them?"

How? *Kālena sarvatra gabhēra-raàhasā*: by the arrangement of eternal time, everything will come about in due course. The example is given that even though you do not want distress, still distress comes upon you. Similarly, even if you do not work hard for the happiness that is destined to be yours, still it will come.

Similarly, Prahāda Mahārāja says, *na tat-prayāsaū kartavyam*: you should not waste your energy for material happiness, because you cannot get more than what you are destined to have. That is not possible. "How can I believe it—that by working harder I will not get more material happiness than I would otherwise have had?"

Because you are undergoing so many distressing conditions even though you do not want them. Who wants distress? For example, in our country, Mahatma Gandhi was killed by his own countrymen. He was a great man, he was protected by so many followers, he was beloved by all—and still he was

killed. Destiny. Who can protect you from all these distressing conditions? "So," you should conclude, "if these distressing conditions come upon me by force, the other kind of condition, the opposite number, will also come. Therefore why shall I waste my time trying to avoid distress and gain so-called happiness? Let me utilize my energy for Kāññea consciousness." That is intelligence. You cannot check your destiny. The magazine's question touches on this point.

Puñña Kāññea: Yes, the usual charge is that this Vedic system of civilization is fatalistic, and that as a result people are not making as much material progress as they otherwise would.

Çréla Prabhupāda: No, no, the Vedic system is not fatalistic. It is fatalistic only in the sense that one's *material* destiny cannot be changed. But your spiritual life is in your hands. our point is this: The whole Vedic civilization is based on the understanding that destiny allows only a certain amount of material happiness in this world, and that our efforts should therefore be directed toward self-realization. Nobody is enjoying uninterrupted material happiness. That is not possible. A certain amount of material happiness and a certain amount of material distress—these both must be present always. So just as you cannot check your distressing condition of life, similarly you cannot check your happy condition of life. It will come automatically. Therefore, don't waste your time with these things. better you utilize your energy for advancing in Kāññea consciousness.

Puñña Kāññea: So then, Çréla Prabhupāda, would it be accurate, after all, to say that people who have this Vedic conception would not try for progress?

Çréla Prabhupāda: No, no. "Progress"—first you must understand what actual progress is. The thing is that if you try to progress vainly, what is the use of trying? If it is a fact you cannot change your material destiny, why should you try for that? Rather, whatever energy you have, utilize it for understanding Kāññea consciousness. That is real progress. Make your spiritual understanding—your understanding of God and self—perfectly clear.

For instance, in our International Society for Krishna Consciousness, our main business is how to make advancement in Kāññea consciousness. We are not enthusiastic about opening big, big factories with big, big money-earning machines. No. We are satisfied with whatever material happiness and distress we are destined. But we are very eager to utilize our energy for progressing in Kāññea consciousness. This is the point.

So the Vedic system of civilization is meant for realizing God: *viññur ārādhyate*. In the Vedic system, people try for that. Actually, the followers of *varēāçrama-dharma*—they never tried for economic development. You'll find in India, still, millions of people taking bath in the Ganges during Kumbha-melā. Have you have been to the Kumbha-melā festival?

Disciple: No.

Çréla Prabhupāda: At the Kumbha-melā, millions of people come to take bath in the Ganges because they are interested in how to become spiritually liberated from this material world. They're not lazy. They travel thousands of miles to take bath in the Ganges at the holy place of Prayag. So although they

are not busy in the dog's race, these people are not lazy. *Yā niçā sarva-bhūtānā tasyā jāgarti saāyamé*: "What is night for ordinary beings is the time of wakefulness for the self-controlled." The self-controlled man wakes up very early—practically in the middle of the night—and works for spiritual realization while others are sleeping. Similarly, during the daytime the dogs and asses think, "We are working, but these spiritualists, they are not working."

So there are two different platforms, the material and the spiritual. Followers of the Vedic civilization, which is practiced in India—although nowadays it is distorted—actually, these people are not lazy. They are very, very busy. Not only very, very busy, but also *kaumāra ācaret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha*: [SB 7.6.1] they are trying to become self-realized from the very beginning of life. They are so busy that they want to begin the busy-ness from their very childhood. Therefore it is wrong to think they are lazy.

People who accuse followers of Vedic civilization of laziness or of "inhibiting progress" do not know what real progress is. The Vedic civilization is not interested in the false progress of economic development. For instance, sometimes people boast, "We have gone from the hut to the skyscraper." They think this is progress. But in the Vedic system of civilization, one thinks about how much he is advanced in self-realization. He may live in a hut and become very advanced in self-realization. But if he wastes his time turning his hut into a skyscraper, then his whole life is wasted, finished. And in his next life he is going to be a dog, although he does not know it. That's all.

Puñña Kāññā: *Ṣṛēla Prabhupāda*, then this question may be raised: If destiny cannot be checked, then why not, when a child is born, simply let him run around like an animal? And whatever happens to him . . .

Ṣṛēla Prabhupāda: No. That is the advantage of this human form of life. You can train the child spiritually. That is possible. Therefore it is said, *tasyaiva hetou prayeteta kovido*: use this priceless human form to attain what you could not attain in so many millions of lower forms. For that spiritual purpose you should engage your energy. That advantage is open to you now, in the human form. *Ahaituky apratihata*: pure devotional service to the Lord, Kāññā consciousness, is open to you now, and it cannot be checked. Just as your advancement of so-called material happiness is already destined and cannot be checked, similarly, your advancement in spiritual life cannot be checked—if you endeavor for it. No one can check your spiritual advancement. Try to understand this.

Puñña Kāññā: So, then, we can't say that the Vedic system, or *sanātana-dharma*, is fatalistic. There actually is endeavor for progress.

Ṣṛēla Prabhupāda: Certainly—spiritual progress. As for the question of "fatalistic," I have often given this example: Let us say a man is condemned by a court of law to be hanged. Nobody can check it. Even the same judge who gave the verdict cannot check it. But if the man begs for the mercy of the king, the king can check the execution. He can go totally above the law. Therefore the *Brahma-saṁhitā* [5.54] says, *karmāṇi nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhājām*: destiny can be changed by Kāññā for His devotees; otherwise it is not

possible.

therefore our only business should be to surrender to Kāññea. And if you artificially want to be more happy by economic development, that is not possible.

Puñña Kāññea: Question number three?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Hm? No. First of all make sure that everything is clear. Why are you so eager to progress? [Laughter.]

Try to understand what is what. The first thing is that your destiny cannot be changed. That's a fact. But in spite of your destiny, if you try for Kāññea consciousness, you can achieve spiritual success. Otherwise, why did Prahlaḍa Mahārāja urge his friends, *kaumāra ācāret*: "Take Kāññea consciousness up from your very childhood"? If destiny cannot be changed, then why was Prahlaḍa Mahārāja urging this? Generally, "destiny" means your material future. That you cannot change. But even that can be changed when you are in spiritual life.

Puñña Kāññea: What is the meaning of *apratihatā*? You said that spiritual development cannot be checked.

Çréla Prabhupāda: *Apratihata* means this: Suppose you are destined to suffer. So *apratihatā* means that in spite of your so-called destiny to suffer, if you take to Kāññea consciousness your suffering will be reduced, or there will be no suffering—and in spite of any suffering, you can make progress in spiritual life. Just like Prahlaḍa Mahārāja himself. His father put him into so many suffering conditions, but he was not impeded—he made spiritual progress. He didn't care about his father's attempts to make him suffer. That state of existence is called *apratihatā*: if you want to execute Kāññea consciousness, your material condition of life cannot check it. That is the real platform of progress.

Of course, insofar as your material condition is concerned, generally that cannot be checked. You have to suffer. But in the case of a devotee, that suffering also can be stopped or minimized. Otherwise, Kāññea's statement would be false: *ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpabhya mokṣayīṣyāmi*—"I will deliver you from all the reactions to your sinful activities." Suffering must befall me on account of my sinful activities, but Kāññea says, "I will deliver you from all the reactions to your sinful activities." This should be clear. Ordinarily, destiny cannot be checked. Therefore, instead of wasting your time trying to change your economic condition or material destiny apart from Kāññea consciousness, you should employ your priceless human energy for attaining Kāññea consciousness, which cannot be checked.

We see so many men working so hard. Does this mean that every one of them will become a Ford, a Rockefeller? Why not? Everyone is trying his best. But Mr. Ford was destined to become a rich man. His destiny was there, and so he became a rich man. Another man may work just as hard as Ford, but this does not mean he will become as rich as Ford. This is practical. You cannot change your destiny simply by working hard like asses and dogs. No. But you can utilize your special human energy for improving your Kāññea consciousness. That's a fact.

Disciple: Çréla Prabhupāda, if destiny cannot be changed, what does Kāñēa mean when He says, "Be thou happy by this sacrifice"?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Do you know what is meant by "sacrifice"?

Disciple: Sacrifice to Viñēu , to Kāñēa.

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. That means pleasing Kāñēa. If Kāñēa is pleased, He can change destiny. *Karmāi nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhājām:* [Bs. 5.54] for those who serve Him with love and devotion, Kāñēa can change destiny. So sacrifice, *yajīa*, means pleasing Kāñēa. Our whole Kāñēa consciousness movement means pleasing Kāñēa. That is the whole program. In all other business, there is no question of pleasing Kāñēa. When one nation declares war upon another, there is no question of pleasing Kāñēa or serving Kāñēa. They're pleasing their own senses, serving their own whims. When the First and Second World Wars began, it was not for pleasing Kāñēa. The Germans wanted that their sense gratification not be hampered by the Britishers. That means it was a war of sense gratification. "The Britishers are achieving their sense gratification; we cannot. All right, fight." So there was no question of pleasing Kāñēa. Hm. Next question?

CONCOCTED RELIGION

Puñōa Kāñēa: Question number three. "It is said that the greatest strength of Hinduism is its catholicity, or breadth of outlook, but that this is also its greatest weakness, in that there are very few common prescribed religious observances which are obligatory for all, as in other religions. Is it necessary and possible to outline certain basic minimum observances for all Hindus?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: So far as the Vedic religion is concerned, it is not simply for the so-called Hindus. That is to be understood. This is *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal and universal nature and duty of every living being. It is for all living entities, all living beings. That is why it is called *sanātana-dharma*. That I have already explained. The living entity is *sanātana*, or eternal; God is *sanātana*; and there is *sanātana-dhāma*, the Lord's eternal abode. As Kāñēa describes in the *Bhagavad-gētā* [8.20], *paras tasmāt tu bhāvo 'nyo vyakto 'vyaktāt sanātanaù:* "Yet there is another unmanifest nature, which is eternal." And in the Eleventh Chapter Kāñēa Himself is described as *sanātanaù*. Do you remember? He is described as *sanātanaù*, the supreme eternal.

So actually, the Vedic system is called *sanātana-dharma*, not Hindu *dharma*. This is a wrong conception. This *sanātana-dharma* is meant for all living entities, not just the so-called Hindus. The very term "Hindu" is a misconception. The Muslims referred to the Indian people, who lived on the other side of the river Sind, as "Sindus"—actually, due to the peculiarities of pronunciation, as "Hindus." In any case, the Muslims called India "Hindustan," which means "the land on the other side of the river Sind, or 'Hind.'"

Otherwise, "Hindustan" has no Vedic reference. So this "Hindu *dharma*" has no Vedic reference.

The real Vedic *dharma* is *sanātana-dharma*, or *varëçgrama-dharma*. First of all, one has to understand this. Now that *sanātana-dharma*, or Vedic *dharma*, is being disobeyed, distorted, and misrepresented, it has come to be misunderstood as "Hinduism." That is a fake understanding. That is not the real understanding. We have to study *sanātana-dharma*, or *varëçgrama-dharma*. Then we'll understand what the Vedic religion is.

Every living entity is eternal, *sanātana*. God is also eternal, and we can live with God in His *sanātana-dhāma*, His eternal abode. This reciprocation is called *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal nature and duty of the living being. So Vedic religion means this *sanātana-dharma*, not "Hindu *dharma*." Read the verse from *Bhagavad-gétā* that describes Kāñëa as *sanātanau*.

Radha-vallabha:

*tvam akñaraà paramaà veditavyaà
tvam asya viçvasya paraà nidhānam
tvam avyayaù çaçvata-dharma-goptā
sanātanas tvaà puruño mato me*

"You are the supreme primal objective You are the ultimate resting place of this universe. You are inexhaustible, and You are the supreme eternal. You are the maintainer of the eternal religion, the Personality of Godhead. This is my opinion." [*Bhagavad-gétā* 11.18]

Çréla Prabhupāda: This understanding is wanted. Kāñëa is eternal, we are eternal, and the place where we will live with Him and exchange our feelings—that is eternal. And the system which teaches this eternal system of reciprocation—that is called *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal religion. It is meant for everyone.

Puñña Kāñëa: How can people follow *sanātana-dharma* on a practical, daily basis?

Çréla Prabhupāda: How are we doing it? Is it not practical? Kāñëa requests, *man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājé mää namaskuru:* "Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer your obeisances to Me." Where is the impracticality? Where is the difficulty? And Kāñëa promises, *mäm evaiñyasy asaänaya:* "If you do this, you'll come to Me. Without any doubt you'll come to Me." Why don't you do that?

Later Kāñëa requests, *sarva-dharmän parityajya mäm ekaà çaraëaà vraja:* [Bg. 18.66] "Give up all varieties of concocted religion and simply surrender to Me." This is practical religion. Just surrender to Kāñëa and think, "I am a devotee of Kāñëa, a servant of Kāñëa." Take this simple approach. Then everything will be immediately done. Real *dharma*, real religion, means *dharmaà tu säkñäd bhagavat-praëëtam:* [SB 6.3.19] what God says, that is *dharma*. Now, God says, "give up all this concocted *dharma* and just surrender unto Me." So take that *dharma*.

Why don't you take Kāñëa's instruction? Why do you go outside His instruction? That is the cause of all your troubles. You do not know the

difference between this *sanātana-dharma*, the real, eternal religion, and your concocted *dharma*. If you take to some false religious system, then you suffer. But if you take to the real religious system, then you'll be happy. Of course, nowadays India, like the rest of the world, has also given up the real religious system—*sanātana-dharma*, or *varëāçrama-dharma*. In India they have accepted a hodgepodge thing called "Hinduism." So there is trouble. Everywhere, but in India especially, people should know that the real religion is this Vedic system. Vedic religion means *varëāçrama-dharma*. Kāñëa says—God says—*cātur-varëyaa mayä säñöam*: [Bg. 4.13] "For spiritual and material progress, the four occupational divisions of society have been set up by Me." So that is obligatory, just as the state law is obligatory. You cannot say, "I don't accept this law." No. You have to accept it if you want to have a happy life. You cannot become an outlaw. Then you'll not be happy. You'll be punished.

Now, God says, *mayä säñöam*: "This *varëāçrama* system is given by Me." So how can we refuse to follow it? that means we are denying the real religion. *Dharmaa tu säkñäd bhagavat-praëétam*: [SB 6.3.19] real *dharma*, real religion, means the order given by God. And God says, *cātur-varëyaa mayä säñöam guëa-karma-vibhāgaçau*: "For the proper management of human society, I have created these four social divisions, based on people's qualities and actions." So you have to accept it.

Puñöa Kāñëa: This would be the prescription for all people?

Çréla Prabhupāda: For everyone. At the head of the social body there must be the intelligent class of men, who will give advice; then there must be the administrative and protective class, the farming and mercantile class, and the laboring class. This is all given in the *Bhagavad-gétä*: *brähmaëa, kñätriya, vaiçya, çüdra*.

But when you fully surrender to Kāñëa, you can give up all the regulations pertaining to these four social classes. That is why Kāñëa says, *sarva-dharmän parityajya*: [Bg. 18.66] "In the ultimate issue, My instruction is to give up all religious formularies"—including even Vedic formularies—"and simply surrender to Me." "*Brähmaëa-dharma*," "*kñätriya-dharma*," "*Hindu dharma*," this *dharma*, that *dharma*—give all these up and simply surrender to Kāñëa, because the ultimate aim of *dharma* is to come to Kāñëa. "You directly come to Me; then everything is all right."

Disciple: So many people concoct their own system and say, "This is the way to go to God."

Çréla Prabhupāda: Then let them suffer. What can be done? If you don't accept the laws of the state and you manufacture your own laws, then you'll suffer. The state says, "Keep to the right." But if you make your own law—"No, I will keep to the left"—then you'll suffer. It's a fact.

Kāñëa is personally advising: *sarva-dharmän parityajya mäm ekaà çaraëäa vraja*: [Bg. 18.66] "Give up all your concocted religions and surrender to Me alone." take His advice and be happy.

CASTE SYSTEM CAST OUT

Puñña Kāññā: Next question, Çréla Prabhupāda. "Will the fundamental values of the Vedic religion be in any way affected by the eradication of the caste system, toward which a concerted effort is now being made at all levels?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: The Vedic system of religion we have been describing—the *varëçrama* system created by Kāññā—is not to be confused with the present-day caste system—determination of social divisions by birth. But as to eradication of all social divisions, it cannot be done. This is still more foolishness, because Kāññā Himself says, *cätur-varëyaà mayä säññam guëa-karma-vibhägacau:* [Bg. 4.13] "This system of four social divisions, according to quality and work, is ordained by Me." But the difficulty is that this so-called caste system has come in, on account of the false notion that in order to be a *brähmaëa*, one must be the son of a *brähmaëa*. That is the caste system. But Kāññā does not say that. He says "according to quality and work." He never says "according to birth." So this so-called caste system in India is a false notion of *cätur-varëyaà*, the system of four social divisions. The real system of *cätur-varëyaà* means *guëa-karma-vibhägacau:*, determination of the four social divisions according to quality and work. One must be qualified. And how does one become qualified? That is also described. For instance, in *Bhagavad-gëtä* Kāññā describes the qualities of a *brähmaëa* as follows: *çamo damas tapaù çaucaà kñäntir äjvam eva ca jñanam vijñanam ästikyam* [Bg. 18.42]. "Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom, and religiousness." So people who want to become *brähmaëas* must be educated to acquire these qualities. It is not enough simply to abolish the caste system, which is contaminated by the false conception of qualification by birthright. Certainly, this wrong caste system should be abolished. Also, educational centers should be opened for teaching people how to become genuine *brähmaëas* and *kñatriyas*. *Guëa-karma-vibhägacau:* according to their qualities and work, people naturally belong to different social groupings. So you cannot avoid it, but because you have created a false caste system, that should be abolished, and the system recommended by Kāññā—that should be adopted.

In any event, you cannot avoid the natural occurrence of various social divisions. Nature's caste system will remain. Take, for example, the brahminical quality of truthfulness. All over the world, wherever you go, you'll find at least one person who is truthful. Does anyone say, "Oh, his father was truthful—therefore, he is truthful"? This is nonsense. Kāññā never says anything like this. The father may be Hiraëyakaçipu, a big demon, but his son can still be Prahlāda, a great devotee of the Lord. It is not that one will inevitably become exactly like one's father. Of course, it may be; there is every possibility. But still it is not a fact that the son unavoidably becomes like the father.

Our point is, wherever you go, you'll find a first-class man who is truthful.

Now, wherever you find a truthful man, you can classify him as a *brāhmaëa* and train him to serve the social body in that capacity, as a spiritual teacher and advisor. That is wanted. Why assume, "Here is the son of a truthful man; therefore he is truthful, a *brāhmaëa*"? That is a misconception. You have to find the truthful men all over the world and train them as *brāhmaëas*. That we are doing. "If you follow these principles—no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling, no meat-eating—you are a *brāhmaëa*. Come on and receive further training." The fellow's father may be a meat-eater or a gambler or a drunkard, but if he himself is truthful and agreeable to the brahminical life, then tell him, "All right, come on—you are welcome." Then everything will be all right.

You could not abolish the truthful class of men even if you wanted to. You'll find truthful men everywhere. You simply have to train them. So Kāñëa says, *cätur-varëyaà mayä säñöam guëa-karma-vibhägacau*: [Bg. 4.13] according to their qualities and work, you take some men and put them in the brahminical class, others in the *kñätريا* class, still others in the *vaicya* class, and the rest in the *çüdra* class. But you cannot abolish that system. That is a false attempt. **Puñöa Kāñëa:** You're saying the natural system is to classify a person and train him for a particular duty, according to his particular inner qualities and his particular propensity to act.

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. That classification is wanted. That must be there.

Puñöa Kāñëa: And what will be the benefit of classifying and training people according to their own qualities and propensities?

Çréla Prabhupāda: The benefit will be that the whole social body will function harmoniously. The social body must have a brain and arms and a belly and legs to be complete. If there is no brain, no head, then what is the use of these arms and legs and belly? It is all dead. So in human society, if there is not a class of learned, truthful, and honest men—men with all the brahminical qualifications—then society is ruined. That is why people are perplexed. Today almost everyone is trained to be a *çüdra*, a laborer: "Go to the factory." That's all. "Go to the factory and get money." And when the man gets some money, he immediately purchases wine and women. So if you try to make society classless, you'll produce such men—useless men, disturbing to the social body. You cannot make society classless. If you try to make it classless, naturally people will all be *çüdras*, fourth-class men, and worse. Then there will be social chaos.

Puñöa Kāñëa: But can all people take an equal interest in religion, despite their belonging to different social classifications?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. This I have already explained, that any civilized human being—he has got some religion. Now, the basic principles of religion are the statements made by God. So here in the Vedic system is what God says. If you take to this system, then the social body will be perfect, not only for Hindus but also for Christians, for Muhammadans, for everyone. And that is being practically realized in our Kāñëa consciousness movement. We have got devotees from all groups of human society, and they are taking to this Vedic system. It is practical. There is no difficulty. So Hindus, Muslims,

Christians—everyone should take to this Kāñhëa religion and become "Krishnites," "Krishnians." [Laughter.] The Greek word *Christo* comes from the Sanskrit *Krishna*. In fact, another spelling of *Krishna* is *Krishta*. So actually, if we take the root meaning, "Christian" means "Krishtian" or "Krishnian." So that is a controversial point, but everyone can take to Kāñhëa. Then everything will be settled up.

ETERNAL TRUTHS VS. EVERYDAY REALITIES

Puñña Kāñhëa: Would you like to hear another question, Çréla Prabhupāda?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Puñña Kāñhëa: "It is said that whereas the *çrutis* [the four original *Vedas*, the *upaniñads*, and the *Vedānta-sūtra*] embody eternal truths, the *smātis* [the *Purāeas*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaëa*, and corollary Vedic literature] embody the rules of conduct and thus need to be revised according to the dictates of the changing times. Will such a view be acceptable to all sections of society, and if so, how can the new *smātis* come into being, and who will give them sanction and sanctity?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: The *smātis* are given by the Lord and His representatives. They come from spiritual authorities such as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The *çāstra*, or scripture, also gives this authority. For instance, for this age, Kali-yuga, the Lord has prescribed a special means of God-realization—the chanting of His holy name. *Smātis* such as the *Bāhan-nārādëya Purāëa* say the same thing—that in this age of Kali-yuga, the only possible means of God-realization is chanting the Lord's name. In the *Bhāgavata Purāëa* [12.3.51] also, Çukadeva Gosvāmë directs,

*kaler doña-nidhe rājann
asti hy eko mahān guëaù
kértanäd eva kãñëasya
mukta-saigaù paraà vrajet*

"Although in this age there are so many faults—it is truly an ocean of faults—still, there is one very great advantage: simply by chanting the Hare Kāñhëa *mantra*, one becomes fully purified and is liberated from all material miseries." So this *smāti* injunction we should take up, and actually we see all over the world how it is purifying all sections of people. Take to this chanting of Hare Kāñhëa; then *çruti*, *smāti*, everything will be fulfilled. This is the easiest method. *Kértanäd eva kãñëasya mukta-saigaù paraà vrajet*: chant the Lord's holy name and you'll be liberated.

Puñña Kāñhëa: So the *çrutis* are eternally relevant and constant?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes, everything is based on the *çrutis*. as the *Vedānta-sūtra* says, *anāvāttiù çabdät*: simply by chanting the Lord's names and

instructions—His sound vibration—one becomes spiritually realized. *Çabda brahman* means "spiritual sound vibration," and as the *Vedānta-sūtra* instructs us, by chanting this spiritual sound vibration—the instructions and holy name of the Lord—one can become liberated.

Puñña Kāñhā: Also, the *smātis* are directly based on the original *çrutis*?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes, for instance, *Bhagavad-gétā* is considered *smāti*. And *Bhagavad-gétā* also says, *satatā kértayanto mää yatantaç ca dāòha-vratäù*: [Bg. 9.14] "Fully endeavoring with determination, the great souls are always chanting My glories." And as the *Bhakti-rasāmāta-sindhu*, which is also considered *smāti*, explains: *çruti-smāti-puräëädi* [BRS 1.2.101]—the great devotees heed both the *çrutis* and the *smātis*. Another *smāti*, *Bāhan-nāradéya Puräëa*, enjoins, *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam*: "In this age of quarrel, the only way to realize the Lord is to chant His holy name, chant His holy name, chant His holy name." So because He was in the role of a great devotee, Lord Caitanya followed these injunctions of *çruti* and *smāti*. *Kāñhā-varëäa tviñākāñhëa säigopäigästra-pärñadam* [SB 11.5.32]. *Kāñhëam varëayati*: Lord Caitanya was always chanting Hare Kāñhëa. These examples are evidence that the *smātis* are directly based on the *çrutis*. So introduce this Hare Kāñhëa *mahā-mantra*. Everyone will be purified.

Puñña Kāñhëa: Is *smāti* more than just rules of conduct?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. Here is what *smāti* means:

The four original *Vedas* are considered *çruti*. But simply by hearing them, one cannot understand fully. Therefore, the *smātis* have explained further.

Purayati iti puräëa: by hearing the *Puräëas* and other *smātis*, one makes his understanding complete. The Vedic *mantras* are not always understood. For instance, the *Vedānta*, which is *çruti*, begins with the *mantra janmādy asya yataù*: [SB 1.1.1] "The Supreme is that being from whom everything has emanated." This is very abbreviated. But the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*, which is *smāti*, explains, *janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataç cārtheñv abhijñäù sva-rät*: [SB 1.1.1] "The Supreme Being, from whom everything has emanated, is directly and indirectly cognizant of everything and is fully independent." In this way the *smāti* explains the *çruti*.

So whether you take *çruti* or *smāti*, the subject matter is the same. Both *çruti* and *smāti* are spiritual evidence. We cannot do without either of them. As Çréla Rūpa Gosvāmé says in the *Bhakti-rasāmāta-sindhu* [1.2.101],

*çruti-smāti-puräëädi-
pañcarātra-vidhiä vinä
aikāntiki harer bhaktir
utpätäyaiva kalpate
[BRS 1.2.101]*

You cannot become purified or actually God conscious without reference to both *çruti* and *smāti*. So as we push on this Kāñhëa consciousness movement, it is not whimsical. It is based on

çruti, *smāti*, and *pañcarātriki-vidhi*, the principles of *çruti*, *smāti*, and the *Nārada-pañcarātra*. Therefore, it is becoming effective

Puñña Kāñhā: Nevertheless, Çréla Prabhupāda, the question asks, "Do the *smātis* need to be revised according to the changing times?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: They cannot be changed.

Puñña Kāñhā: The *smātis* cannot be changed?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Nothing can be changed. But according to the time, you have to apply the principles properly. For instance, in Kali-yuga the *smāti* order is *kértanād eva kāñhāsya mukta-saigaṁ paraṁ vrajet*: to obtain spiritual liberation, one must chant the holy name of the Lord, Hare Kāñhā. So you have to do this. For instance, a doctor may order, "In the morning, take this medicine; in the evening, take that medicine." It is not a change of the doctor's orders. It is simply that according to the time, the doctor's orders call for a particular medicine. But the particular medicine is recommended by the doctor, not by your whims. *Çruti* and *smāti* cannot be changed, but they may recommend a particular process at a particular time. So there must be adherence to both *çruti* and *smāti*—to scriptural authority. You cannot modify.

Puñña Kāñhā: There is no question, then, of—as the magazine puts it—"new *smāti*."

Çréla Prabhupāda: No. New *smāti*? they may take it as "new *smāti*," but *smāti* is *smāti*—it is not new. In any spiritual statement, you have to give references to *çruti* and *smāti*. Otherwise, it is not valid. There must be *veda-pramāṇa*, *çabda-pramāṇa*: evidence from the *Vedas* and from the explanatory Vedic literature. Otherwise, there is no evidence. Your statement is not valid: you cannot change the original *çruti-smāti*. But you have to take their particular recommendation for the particular time, just as Kāñhā Caitanya Mahāprabhu did when He urged His followers to heed the injunction of *Bāhan-nārādēya Purāṇa* [3.8.126]:

*harer nāma harer nāma
harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
nāsty eva gatir anyathā
[Adi 17.21]*

"Chant the holy name, chant the holy name, chant the holy name of Kāñhā. In the present age of quarrel and anxiety, there is no other way to attain God realization, no other way, no other way." So *çruti-smāti-pramāṇa*—citing evidence from the *Vedas* and the corollary literature—is the only method for making a spiritual statement. You have to take it.

Puñña Kāñhā: Can anyone change ...

Çréla Prabhupāda: No!

Puñña Kāñhā: ... the rules of conduct as described in the *smātis*?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Nobody can change them. But these particular rules and regulations in *çruti-smāti* are for particular times, particular circumstances. So we have to take these rules and regulations. You cannot change them.

Puñña Kāñhā: And who will sanction a particular application for a particular time and place?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. This was done by Lord Çré Kāñëa Caitanya. When he appeared five hundred years ago, he sanctioned the application of *çruti-smāti* because He's a genuine authority. He's a genuine *ācārya*. And we are following in the footsteps of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is not whimsical. You have to follow the authority in all circumstances.

Puñña Kāñëa: Is this Vedic religion, this *sanātana-dharma*, so broad that everyone is included?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. *Sanātana* means "eternal." As Kāñëa says in the *Bhagavad-gētā*, *na hanyate hanyamāne çarère*: [Bg. 2.20] "The living entity within the body is not destroyed when the body is destroyed, because he is eternal." So that eternity belongs to everyone. Not that the Hindus, after giving up this body, exist, and the Muslims or Christians do not exist. Everyone exists eternally. So *sanātana-dharma* is meant for everyone.

Puñña Kāñëa: Then is there anyone actually outside of *sanātana-dharma*?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Nobody is actually outside. Everyone is an eternal spirit soul, and therefore everyone is meant for the eternal religion, *sanātana-dharma*. You may think that you are not an eternal spirit soul, but that is simply illusion. There are so many rascals who think that with the death of the body, everything is finished. They may think so, but that is not a fact. Similarly, you may think, "I am not a *sanātana-dharmé*—a follower of *sanātana-dharma*—I am a Christian," but actually you are a *sanātana-dharmé*. Of course, if you wish to think otherwise, you can. Who can check it?

Hari-sauri: So whether one can be accepted as following *sanātana-dharma* depends on how one acts?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. If one does not act accord to the rules and regulations of *sanātana-dharma*, that is his business. That's all.

THE ULTIMATE KNOWLEDGE

Puñña Kāñëa: Çréla Prabhupāda, this is the next question: "In the Kali-yuga, the current age of quarrel and hypocrisy, *bhakti* [devotional service to the Lord] has been described as the most suitable and easiest of paths for God realization. Yet how is it that Vedantic teachings, with their accent on *jñāna* [cultivation of knowledge], are being given the pride of place by noted savants?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: The so-called Vedantists, the Māyāvādés [impersonalists], are bluffers. They do not know what *Vedānta* is. But people want to be bluffed, and the bluffers take advantage of it. The two words combined in the word *Vedānta* are *veda* and *anta*. *Veda* means "knowledge," and *anta* means "goal" or "end." so *Vedānta* means "the end of all knowledge, or *veda*." Now, in the *Bhagavad-gētā* Lord Kāñëa says, *vedaiç ca sarvair aham eva vedyau*: [Bg. 15.15] "By all the *Vedas* I am to be known." So the whole

Vedānta-sūtra is a description of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The first statement in the *Vedānta-sūtra* is *athāto brahma jijñāsā*: "Now, having attained a human birth, one should inquire into Brahman, the Absolute Truth." In a nutshell, Brahman is then described: *janmādy asya yataù* [SB 1.1.1]—"Brahman is the origin of everything." And in *Bhagavad-gētā* Kāñëa says, *ahaà sarvasya prabhavaù*: "I am the origin of everything." So, again, the *Vedānta-sūtra* actually describes Kāñëa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now, because Çréla Vyāsadeva knew that in this Kali-yuga people would not be able to study *Vedānta-sūtra* nicely on account of a lack of education, he personally wrote a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. That commentary is *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*. *Bhāñyaà brahma-sūtrānām*:^{3**} the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* is the real commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, written by the author of the *Vedānta-sūtra* himself. The *Vedānta-sūtra* was written by Vyāsadeva, and under the instruction of Nārada, his spiritual master, Vyāsadeva wrote a commentary on it. That is *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*.

Çrémad-Bhāgavatam begins with the same aphorism as the *Vedānta-sūtra*: *janmādy asya yataù* [SB 1.1.1], and continues, *anvayād itarataç cārtheñv abhijñāù svarāt*. So actually, the *Vedānta-sūtra* is explained by the author in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*.

But the rascal Māyāvādés—without understanding *Vedānta-sūtra*, and without reading the natural commentary, *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*—are posing themselves as Vedantists. That means they are misguiding people. And because people are not educated, they're accepting these rascals as Vedantists. Really, the Māyāvādé Vedantists—they are bluffers. They are not Vedantists. They do not know anything of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. That is the difficulty. Actually, what is stated in the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*—that is real *Vedānta*.

So, if we take *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* as the real explanation of *Vedānta-sūtra*, then we will understand *Vedānta*, the end of knowledge. And if we take shelter of the Māyāvādé Vedantists, the bluffers, then we cannot understand *Vedānta*. People do not know anything, and as a result they can be bluffed and cheated by anyone. Therefore now they should learn from this Kāñëa consciousness movement what *Vedānta* is and what the explanation of *Vedānta-sūtra* is. Then they will be benefited.

If we accept *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* as the real commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*, then we'll find that in the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* it is said, *kaler doña-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guëaù*: "In this Kali-yuga, which is an ocean of faults, there is one benediction, one opportunity." What is that? *Kértanād eva kāñëasya mukta-saigaù paraà vrajet*: "One can become liberated simply by chanting the Hare Kāñëa mantra." This is real *Vedānta*. And actually, this liberation by chanting Hare Kāñëa is happening. But people want to be misguided. And there are so many bluffers to misguide them. What can be done? Vyāsadeva has already given the perfect explanation of *Vedānta-sūtra*—the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*. So let people read the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*; then they will understand what *Vedānta* is.

Puñña Kāñëa: Then are the conclusion of the *Vedānta-sūtra* and the conclusion of *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* one and the same—*bhakti*?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. Find this verse: *Kāmasya nendriya-prétir...*
Puñña Kāñña:

*kāmasya nendriya-prétir
lābho jéveta yāvatā
jévasya tattva-jijñāsā
nārtho yaç ceha karmabhiù*

"Life's desires should never be directed toward sense gratification. One should desire only a healthy life, or self-preservation, since a human being is meant for inquiry about the Absolute Truth. Nothing else should be the goal of one's works." [*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.10]

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. This verse of *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* proceeds directly from the *Vedānta-sūtra*—*athāto brahma jijñāsā*: "Now is the time to inquire about the Absolute Truth." Here the very same thing is explained. "Don't be entrapped with these temporary, bodily 'necessities of life'—sense gratification. You must inquire about the Absolute Truth." the next verse of *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* explains, *vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvaà yaj jñānam advayam*: [SB 1.2.11] "Those who know the Absolute Truth describe Him in this way ..." *Tattva* means "truth." The truth is explained by the *tattva-vit*, one who knows the truth. How? *Brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti çabdya*: the Absolute Truth is explained as Brahman, the all-pervading spiritual effulgence; as Paramātmā, the localized Supersoul; or as Bhagavān, the Supreme Lord. Understanding these is what *Vedānta-sūtra* means when it says, *athāto brahma jijñāsā*: "Now one should learn about the Absolute Truth—what Brahman is, what Paramātmā is, what Bhagavān is. In this way, one should make advancement in his spiritual consciousness."

The Māyāvādē Vedantists follow the impersonal commentary of Çaikarācārya, *Çārēra-ka-bhāñya*. But there are other commentaries on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Besides the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*, the natural commentary by the author of *Vedānta-sūtra* himself, there are *Vedānta-bhāñyas* written by Vaiñēava ācāryas such as Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Viñēu Swami, and Baladeva Vidyābhūñana. Unfortunately, the Māyāvādē Vedantists do not care to read these Vaiñēava *Vedānta-bhāñyas*. They simply read *Çārēra-ka-bhāñya* and call themselves Vedantists.

Puñña Kāñña: Why do the Māyāvādē Vedantists read only one commentary? What is the reason for that?

Çréla Prabhupāda: The reason is that they want to read something that will confirm their illusion that they are God. the Māyāvādē Vedantists cheat. Suppose I present some proposition. If it is a misconception, generally there are others also who can say something to clarify this misconception. For instance, in a court of law, there are two lawyers. One lawyer is speaking on one point of the law, the other lawyer is speaking on another point of the law. But if the judge listens to one side only, then how will he make a proper judgement? Similarly, the Vedantists are simply reading the *Çārēra-ka-bhāñya*. They are not reading other *bhāñyas*, such as the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the natural commentary. And they are

cheating people. That's all.

Now, the *Vedānta-sūtra* says, *janmādy asya yatai:* [SB 1.1.1] "The Absolute Truth is that from which everything emanates." But this needs some explanation. One may ask, "Is that Absolute Truth personal or impersonal?" Therefore in the *Bhagavad-gētā* Kāñēa clearly says, *ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaṁ sarvaṁ pravartate*: [Bg. 10.8] "I am the origin of everything; everything comes from Me." So why don't you Māyāvādē Vedantists take it? Why do you simply remain stuck at the point that the Absolute Truth is that from which everything emanates? When Kāñēa, the Absolute Truth, comes before you and says, "I am the origin of everything—everything comes from Me," why don't you accept Kāñēa as the Absolute Truth? Why do you take the impersonalist view only, that the Absolute Truth has no form? Here is the Absolute Truth speaking—a person. Why don't you take it?

Of course, if people want to be cheated, then who can stop them? In *Bhagavad-gētā* Kāñēa also says, *vedānta-kād ... eva cāham*: "I am the compiler of *Vedānta*." Why do these rascals not consider who compiled *Vedānta*? Vyāsadeva is the incarnation of Kāñēa. He compiled *Vedānta*. Why do these rascals not consider the original Vedantist, Kāñēa? They approach a Māyāvādē instead. So how will they understand *Vedānta*?

Suppose I have written a book. If you cannot understand something in it, then you should come directly to me for an explanation. That is sensible. Why go to a rascal who has nothing to do with my book? Similarly, some rascal Māyāvādē may claim, "I am a Vedantist," but why should I go to a rascal instead of the real compiler of the *Vedānta-sūtra*?

Those who approach the Māyāvādē Vedantists for knowledge are also rascals. They are willingly being cheated. Let the Māyāvādē Vedantists and their followers accept the conclusions of *Bhagavad-gētā* and *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*. Then they will understand *Vedānta-sūtra*. They'll be real Vedantists. Otherwise, they will remain cheaters. So if you go to a cheater you'll be cheated, and that is your business.

Puñōa Kāñēa: Çréla Prabhupāda, are you saying that the Māyāvādēs have no knowledge at all?

Çréla Prabhupāda: Once again, *Vedānta* means "the ultimate knowledge." And what is that knowledge? Kāñēa explains in the *Bhagavad-gētā* [7.19]: *bahūnā janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate*. "After many births, one who is actually in knowledge at last surrenders unto Me." So unless one surrenders to Kāñēa, there is no *jñāna*, no knowledge.

Therefore the Māyāvādē Vedantists are all nonsense—they have no knowledge at all. The subject matter of ultimate knowledge, *Vedānta*, is Kāñēa, God. So if one does not know who God is, who Kāñēa is, and if one does not surrender to Him, then where is the question of knowledge? But if a rascal claims that "I am a man of knowledge," what can be done?

In *Bhagavad-gētā* Kāñēa goes on to explain: *vāsudevaṁ sarvaṁ iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ* [Bg. 7.19]. "when one understands that Vāsudeva, Kāñēa, is everything, then that is knowledge. But such a *mahātmā* is very rare." Before coming to this understanding, one has no knowledge. His so-called

understanding is simply misunderstanding. *Brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate*: one may begin with understanding impersonal Brahman by the speculative method; then, in the secondary stage, one can understand the Paramātmā, the Lord's localized aspect; and the final stage is to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kāñēa. *Vedaiḥ ca sarvair aham eva vedyam*: [Bg. 15.15] by all the *Vedas*, Kāñēa is to be known. That is the ultimate knowledge. But if you do not understand Kāñēa, then where is your knowledge? Half-way knowledge is not knowledge. It must be complete knowledge.

That complete knowledge is possible, as it is said in the *Bhagavad-gētā*, *bahūnā janmanām ante* [Bg. 7.19]—after many births. Those who are striving to acquire knowledge—after many, many births, when actually by the grace of God and by the grace of a devotee they come to knowledge, then such persons agree, "Oh, *vāsudevaṁ sarvam iti*: [Bg. 7.19] Kāñēa is everything." *Sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*: that *mahātmā*, that great soul, is very rarely to be found. *Durlabhaḥ* means "very rarely found," but the word used is *sudurlabhaḥ*—"very, very rarely to be found." So you cannot easily find such a *mahātmā* who clearly understands Kāñēa.

GETTING SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Puñña Kāñēa: May I ask another question, Ṣrēla Prabhupāda? "Is a *guru* essential for one to enter the spiritual path and attain the goal, and how does one recognize one's *guru*?"

Ṣrēla Prabhupāda: Yes, a *guru* is necessary. In the *Bhagavad-gētā*, when Kāñēa and Arjuna were talking as friends, there was no conclusion. So Arjuna decided to accept Kāñēa as his *guru*. Find this verse in *Bhagavad-gētā*: *kārpaëya-doñopahata svabhāvaḥ*.

Hari-sauri:

*kārpaëya-doñopahata svabhāvaḥ
pācchāmi tvaḥ dharma-sammūḍha-cetāu
yac chreyaḥ syān niḥcitaḥ brūhi tan me
ṣṭīyas te 'haḥ ṣādhi māḥ tvāḥ prapannam*

"[Arjuna said:] Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of miserly weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me for certain what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." [Bg. 2.7]

Ṣrēla Prabhupāda: Yes. So a *guru* is necessary. Like Arjuna, everyone is perplexed about his best course of action. Nobody can decide by himself. Even a physician—when he is sick he does not devise his own treatment. He calls for another physician, because his brain is not in order. How can he

prescribe the right medicine for himself?

similarly, when we are perplexed and cannot find any solution, at that time the *guru* is required. It is therefore essential for everyone to surrender to a *guru*, since in our present existence we are all perplexed. Arjuna is representing the perplexed position of the materialistic person. So under the circumstances, a *guru* is required to give us real direction.

Now, Arjuna selected Kāññēa as his *guru*. He did not go to anyone else, because he knew, "I can't find any other means to pacify me. You are the only one." The purport is that like Arjuna, we should also accept Kāññēa as the *guru* who can instruct us in how to get relief from our perplexed position. So Kāññēa is the *guru* not only for Arjuna, but for everyone.

If we take instruction from Kāññēa and abide by that instruction, then our life is successful. Conveying that fact is our mission. This Kāññēa consciousness movement teaches, "Accept Kāññēa as your *guru*. Don't divert your attention." We don't say, "I am Kāññēa; follow my order." We never say that. We simply ask people, "Please abide by the order of Kāññēa." Kāññēa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja* [Bg. 18.66], and we say the same thing: "Give up all other ideas of so-called *dharma* and surrender to Kāññēa." The same thing. we don't say of ourselves, "I am the authority." No, we say, "Kāññēa is the authority, and you should surrender to His instruction and try to understand Him." This is the Kāññēa consciousness movement.

Now, one may say, "Kāññēa is no longer present, so how can I surrender to Him?" Kāññēa is no longer present? How can you say that? Kāññēa's instruction is there—*Bhagavad-gētā*. How can you say that Kāññēa is not present? Kāññēa, being absolute, is not different from His words. The words of Kāññēa and Kāññēa Himself—they are the same. That is the meaning of Absolute Truth. In the relative world, the word *water* and the substance water are different. When I am thirsty, if I simply chant "Water, water, water," my thirst will not be satisfied. I require the real water. That is the nature of the relative world and relative consciousness. But in the spiritual world or spiritual consciousness, the name is the same as the thing that is named. For instance, we are chanting Hare Kāññēa. If Kāññēa were different from the chanting of Hare Kāññēa, then how could we be satisfied chanting the whole day and night? This is the proof. An ordinary name—if you chant "Mr. John, Mr. John," after chanting three times you'll cease. But this Hare Kāññēa *mahā-mantra*—if you go on chanting twenty-four hours a day, you'll never become tired. This is the spiritual nature of the Absolute Truth. This is practical. Anyone can perceive it.

So Kāññēa is present through His words and through His representati
Therefore we advise everyone to accept Kāññēa's instructions in *Bhagavad-gētā* and to surrender to His bona fide representati You have to accept a *guru*, so why go to a pseudo *guru*, who will mislead you? Why not take instructions from a real *guru*? Now you are in doubt about whether a *guru* is needed. Yes, a *guru* is needed, but you have to go to a real *guru*. That is the instruction given by Kāññēa in the *Bhagavad-gētā*. Just find this

*tad viddhi praëipātena
paripraçnena sevayā
upadekñyanti tad-jñānā
jñāninas tattva-darçinā*

Puñña Kāññā: "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth."

[*Bhagavad-gētā* 4.34]

Çréla Prabhupāda: So this is the real *guru*—one who has seen the truth, just as Arjuna has seen Kāññā. Arjuna heard Kāññā's instructions and said, "You are the Absolute Truth." Now, if you take the instruction of Arjuna, then you will understand the Absolute Truth. So what is the instruction of Arjuna? Find out in the tenth chapter.

Puñña Kāññā:

*arjuna uvāca
paraṁ brahma paraṁ dhāma
pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān
puruṣaṁ çāçvataṁ divyam
ādi-devam ajaṁ vibhum*

"Arjuna said, 'You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth. You are the eternal, transcendental, original person, the unborn, the greatest.'" [*Bhagavad-gētā* 10.12]

Çréla Prabhupāda: And the *Vedānta-sūtra* says, *athāto brahma jijñāsā*: "Now, in the human form of life, is the time to inquire into what is the Supreme Brahman." So here in *Bhagavad-gētā* Arjuna has realized, "O Kāññā, You are the Supreme Brahman," So you should make Arjuna your *guru* and Kāññā your *guru*. Arjuna is the representative of Kāññā, the friend of Kāññā. The *guru* is essential. But why go to a bogus *guru*? You will be cheated. For instance, when you are diseased, for your treatment you need to go to a physician. But you want to go to a real physician, not a cheater who has no knowledge of medical science and misrepresents himself—"I am a physician, an M.D." Then you'll be cheated. The *guru* is necessary; that's a fact. But go to the real *guru*. Who is the real *guru*? The real *guru* is Kāññā or one who has seen Kāññā, such as Arjuna.

CIVILIZATION MEANS REGULATION

Puñña Kāññā: May I ask the next question, Çréla Prabhupāda? "Are fasting and other dietary regulations necessary for leading a spiritual life?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: Certainly. For advancement in spiritual life, such *tapasya*

is essential. *Tapasya* means voluntarily accepting something which may be painful. For instance, we are recommending no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling, no meat-eating. So those who are accustomed to these bad habits—for them, in the beginning it may be a little difficult. But in spite of this difficulty, one has to do it. That is *tapasya*. To rise early in the morning—for those who are not practiced, it is a little painful, but one has to do it. So according to the Vedic injunctions, there are some *tapasyas* that must be done.

It is not "I may do it or not do it." These austerities *must* be done. For example, in the *Muëḍaka Upaniñad* it is ordered that if one wants to become self-realized, one must approach a spiritual master: *tad-vijñānārthaà sa gurum evābhigacchet* [MU 41.2.12]. So there is no question of "optional"; it must be done. And one must carry out the order of the spiritual master and the order of the *çāstra*, or scripture. When you follow without consideration of whether it is convenient or inconvenient, simply because it must be done, that is called *tapasya*. *Tapo divyam*: like other great spiritual authorities, Rsbhadeva orders that this human life is meant for austerity aimed toward realizing God. Therefore in our Vedic civilization we find so many rules and regulations. At the very beginning of life one must be a *brahmācārē*. He must go to the spiritual master's place and act like a menial servant. If the spiritual master says "go and pick up some wood from the forest," one may be a king's son, but he cannot refuse the spiritual master's order. He must go. Even Kāñēa was ordered by His spiritual master to go and pick up some dry wood from the forest. So He had to go. Although His father was Nanda Mahārāja, a village *vaicya* king, and although Kāñēa was the Personality of Godhead Himself, still He could not refuse. He had to go. *Nicavat*—just like a menial servant. This is *brahmācārya*, spiritual student life. This is *tapasya*. *Tapasya* is so essential that one has to do it. There is no question of an alternati

After *brahmācārē* life, one may marry. This means he enters *gāhastha* life, household life. That is also *tapasya*. He cannot have sex whenever he likes. No. The *çāstra* says, "You must have sex like this: once in a month and only for begetting children." So that is also *tapasya*.

People do not follow any *tapasya* at the present moment, but human life is meant for *tapasya*—regulative principles. Even in ordinary affairs—let us say you are driving your car on some urgent business, and you see a red light. You have to stop. You cannot say, "I have to be there in a few minutes. I must go." No. You must stop. That is *tapasya*.

So *tapasya* means following the regulative principles strictly, according to the higher order. and that is human life.

Animal life, however, means you can do whatever you like. On the road, animals may keep to the right or keep to the left; it doesn't matter. Their irregularity is not taken as an offense, because they are animals. But if a human being does not follow the regulative principles, he is sinful. He'll be punished. Consider the same example: When there is a red light, if you do not stop you'll be punished. But if a cat or dog transgresses—"Never mind the red light; I shall go"—he's not punished. So *tapasya* is meant for the human being.

He must do it if he at all wants to make progress in life. It is essential.

Puñña Kāñña: And so, Çréla Prabhupāda, *tapasya* includes dietary regulations?

Çréla Prabhupāda: That is also *tapasya*. For example, we prohibit meat-eating. So in your country this is a little troublesome. From the very beginning of life, a child is habituated to eating meat. the mother purchases powdered meat and mixes it with liquid and feeds it to the infant. I have seen it. So practically everyone has been brought up eating meat. yet I say, "Don't eat meat." Therefore that is troublesome. But if one is serious about becoming self-realized, one must accept the order. That is *tapasya*.

Tapasya applies to diet, to personal behavior, to dealings with others, and so on and so forth. In every aspect of life, there is *tapasya*. That is all described in the *Bhagavad-gētā*. Mental *tapasya*. Bodily *tapasya*. Verbal *tapasya*—controlling *vaco-vegām*, the urge to talk loosely or whimsically. You cannot talk nonsense. If you talk, you must talk about Kāñña. That is *tapasya*. There is also *tapasya* in connection with *krodha-vegām*, the urge to express one's anger. If one becomes angry and wants to express it by beating someone or doing something very violent, *tapasya* will restrict him—"No, don't do it." There is also *tapasya* with regards to the tongue, belly, and genitals. One cannot eat anything and everything, or at any time he pleases. Nor can one have sex freely, but only according to the scriptural injunctions. "I am sexually inclined, but I cannot do it. This is not the time." That is *tapasya*. So one should practice *tapasya* in every way—in body, mind, words, personal behavior, and dealings with others. That is human life. *Tapo divyam*: if you want to simply be a human being, and especially if you want to make progress in spiritual life, you must act according to the sastric injunctions. That means *tapasya*. Before Brahma could take part in creation, he had to undergo *tapasya*. Is it not stated in the *çāstra*? Yes. So *tapasya* is essential. You cannot avoid it.

And what is the aim of performing *tapasya*? The aim is to please the Supreme Lord through the spiritual master. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo*: ** "One can attain the mercy of the Lord only by attaining the mercy of the spiritual master." This is the idea.

Now, in today's educational institutions, who is teaching this *tapasya*? Where is the school or college? The students are even smoking in front of their teacher, and it is tolerated. No offense. What can you expect from such students? This is an animal civilization. This is not human civilization. No *tapasya*, no *brahmacārē* life. Real civilization means *tapo divyam*, godly austerity. And this *tapasya* begins with *brahmacārē* life, learning to control the senses—that is the beginning of life. Not "A-B-C-D" learning, and maybe your character is less than an animal's, though you have a degree from the university. "Never mind. You have become a learned man." No—that is not accepted.

Even from the standpoint of basic moral instruction, we must ask, Who today is educated? The educated person is described by Cāēakya Paēōita:

*mätā-vat para-dāreṇu
para-dravyeṇu loṇōra-vat
ātma-vat sarva-bhūteṇu
yaù paçyati sa paëðitāu*

"The educated man sees another's wife as his mother and another's property as untouchable garbage, and he sees all others as equal to himself."

That is the *paëðita*, the learned man. In *Bhagavad-gétā* [5.18] Kāñëa also describes the *paëðita*:

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne
brāhmaëe gavi hastini
çuni caiva çva-pāke ca
paëðitāu sama-darçināu*

"The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle *brāhmaëa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater." That is a learned man. Not this degree-holder. A degree-holder who has no *tapasya* and no character—Kāñëa says he is *māyayāpahāta-jñānā*, "his knowledge is stolen by illusion." Although he has learned so many things, nonetheless, *māyā* has taken away his knowledge. He's a rascal. He's an animal. This is the perspective of Vedic civilization.

CLEANSING THE HEART

Puñña Kāñëa: Next question, Çréla Prabhupāda? "What is the role of rituals in religion? Are they to be discouraged, as is being advocated by some reformists, or are they to be encouraged? If so, in what form?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: A ritual is a practice based on *tapasya*, or austerity. Generally, unless one undergoes the ritualistic ceremonies for purification, he remains unclean. But in this age, because it is practically impossible to induce people to take up all these ritualistic processes, both the scripture and Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommend, "Chant the Hare Kāñëa *mahā-mantra*." This is the special advantage of this age—that by constant chanting of the Hare Kāñëa *mahā-mantra*, one automatically becomes purified. In His *Çikñāññōaka*, Lord Caitanya describes the progressive benefits of chanting Hare Kāñëa. First, *ceto-darpaëa-mārjanam* [Cc. Antya 20.12]. The beginning is cleansing the heart, because we are impure on account of dirty things within our heart, accumulated lifetime after lifetime in the animalistic way of life. So everything—advancement of spiritual life, culture, *tapasya*—is meant to cleanse the heart. And in this process of chanting the *mahā-mantra*, the first installment of benefit is the cleansing of the heart. *Ceto-darpaëa-*

mārjanam.

And when the heart is cleansed, then a person becomes eligible for being freed from the clutches of *māyā*, or the materialistic way of life. He understands that he is not this body—that he's a spirit soul, and that his business is therefore different from merely material concerns. He thinks, "Now I am engaged only in seeking these bodily comforts of life. These are not at all essential, because my body will change. Today, since I am in an American body, I think I have so many duties as an American man. Tomorrow I may be in an American dog body, and immediately my duty would change. So I can understand that these bodily concerns are not my real business. My real business is how to elevate myself—as a spirit soul—to the spiritual world, back to home, back to Godhead."

In this way the person who chants Hare Kāñṇa purifies his consciousness. Then his materialistic activity is stopped. He knows, "This is simply a waste of time. I must act spiritually." That is knowledge, which comes from cleansing the heart (*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam* [Cc. Antya 20.12]). The illusion of wrongly working on the basis of the bodily concept of life is overcome simply by the chanting of the Hare Kāñṇa *mahā-mantra*. This is the first installment of benefit from chanting.

And then there is *bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam*: the process of stopping the blazing fire of material existence. Next, *çreyaṇ-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam*: his life becomes completely auspicious; and *vidyā-vadhū-jēvanam*: he becomes filled with transcendental knowledge. The next benefit is *ānandāmbudhi-varḍanam*: the ocean of transcendental bliss increases; and *pūrēāmātāsavadanam*: he tastes the nectar of Kāñṇa consciousness at every step of life. In other words, his life becomes totally blissful. Finally, *sarvātma-snapanaṇ paraṇ vijāyate çrē-kāñṇa-saikērtanam*: all glories to this *saikērtana* movement, the chanting of the Hare Kāñṇa *mahā-mantra*!

So this *saikērtana* movement is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's gift, and by taking up this chanting one attains *kevala-bhakti*, unalloyed devotion to the Lord. All the benefits of practicing austerities, penances, mystic *yoga*, and so on will be totally achieved simply by the chanting of the Hare Kāñṇa *mantra*. This is stated in the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* [6.1.15]:

*kecit kevalayā bhaktyā
vāsudeva-parāyaṇāṇ
aghaṇ dhunvanti kārtsnyena
nēhāram iva bhāskarāṇ*

Just as when the sun rises the all-pervading fog immediately disappears, so in this Kali-yuga, by the process of *bhakti-yoga*—especially by chanting the Hare Kāñṇa *mahā-mantra*—all one's sins are eradicated and one becomes fully reformed. In other words, one comes to the spiritual platform, and that is success in life.

THE PROCESS OF PURIFICATION

Puñña Kāñhā: Ćréla Prabhupāda, the next question somewhat echoes the previous one: "There are various *saāskāras*, or purificatory ceremonies, prescribed for every civilized person, from birth to death. Many of these *saāskāras* are not being observed today. Should they be revived?"

Ćréla Prabhupāda: The real aim of *saāskāras* is to bring a rascal to the platform of knowledge. *Janmanā jāyate ċūdrau:* by birth, everyone is the same—*ċūdra*. In other words, one is without any knowledge. So the purpose of *saāskāras* is to gradually bring a person who has no knowledge of spiritual life to the spiritual platform. As it is said, *saāskārād bhaved dvijaū:* by the purificatory processes, one attains spiritual rebirth. That is essential. Human life is the opportunity for understanding what one is and what the aim of one's life is. The aim of life is to go back home, back to Godhead. After all, we are part and parcel of God. Somehow or other, we are now in this material existence. So the real aim of life is to return to the spiritual world, where there is no struggle for existence—blissful, happy life. We want unending blissful life, but it is not possible in the material world. That happiness is in the spiritual world. So our aim should be to go there, and every human being should be given the chance. That is real education. That is called *saāskāra*, the process of purification.

Now, altogether there are *daṇa-vidha-saāskārah*, ten kinds of purificatory processes. So, in this age it is very difficult to follow them. But if one chants the Hare Kāñhā *mahā-mantra* without any offense, under the guidance of a spiritual master, all these *saāskāras* automatically become fulfilled, and one returns to his original, spiritual position.

Ahaā brahmāsmi—"I am a spirit soul." So, we are Brahman, spirit, and Kāñhā is Param Brahman, the Supreme Spirit. As Arjuna said, *paraā brahma paraā dhāma pavitraā paramaā bhavān:* [Bg. 10.12] "You are the Supreme Spirit, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth." Kāñhā is Brahman, or spirit, and I am also Brahman, but He's the Supreme Brahman, while I am minute Brahman. So my business is to serve Kāñhā. That is the teaching of Lord Caitanya: *jévera 'svarūpa' haya kāñhēra 'nitya-dāsa'* [Cc. *Madhya* 20.108]—"The real identity of the living being is that he is the eternal servant of Kāñhā." So if one engages himself in his original, spiritual business, acting as the servant of Kāñhā, then all processes of purification and reformation are fulfilled.

And that advantage of re-engagement in our original, spiritual business is given freely in this age: *kértanād eva kāñhēasya mukta-saigaū paraā vrajet*—"Simply by chanting the Lord's holy name, one achieves spiritual liberation." The reformatory processes, or *saāskāras*, are meant for purifying a person so that he becomes *mukta-saigaū*, liberated from all the bad association of material existence and eligible to go back home, back to Godhead. So this is the special advantage of chanting the Hare Kāñhā *mahā-mantra*.

The question was, "Should purificatory processes be revived?" They should be

revived as far as necessary, but all of them cannot be revived in this age. So people should take to the chanting of the Hare Kāñḍa *mahā-mantra*. Then all reformation will be there, and people will come to the spiritual platform—*brahma-bhūta*, the realization of Brahman. Then *prasannātmā*: they'll be happy. *Na ṣocati na kāṅkṣati*: there will be no lamentation or needless hankering. *Samaṁ sarveṇa bhūteṇu*: they will see everyone on the spiritual platform. And finally, *mad-bhaktiā labhate param* [Bg. 18.54]. In this way they will come to the platform of devotional service, and then their life becomes successful. Is that question answered or not?

Puñḍa Kāñḍa: Yes. Just one question I have, Çréla Prabhupāda. You said that the *saṁskāras* should be revived as far as necessary?

Çréla Prabhupāda: The essentials. For instance, to make one a *brāhmaṇa*, these four things are essential: no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no intoxication, no gambling. These essentials must be there; you cannot dispense with them. You must at least avoid sinful activities. Then one can practice Kāñḍa consciousness. As Kāñḍa says in the *Bhagavad-gētā* [7.28]:

*yeñāā tv anta-gataā pāpāā
janānāā puēya-karmaēām
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā
bhajante mād dādha-vratāt*

"Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life and whose sinful actions are completely eradicated are freed from the dualities of delusion, and they engage themselves in My service with determination." You cannot become a devotee unless you give up sinful activity. Therefore you have to begin by following these four prohibitions. You have to avoid sinful activities like illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling, and intoxication, including tobacco, coffee, and tea. Then you'll gradually become completely sinless. On one side you have to follow restrictions, and on the other side you have to engage yourself in devotional service. To engage oneself in devotional service under the order of the spiritual master and the *çāstra* is the way to remain on the transcendental platform.

The transcendental platform means there is no sinful activity. It is above any question of "sinful." "Pious" and "sinful" activities are there only as long as you are on the material platform. "Good" and "bad," "pious" and "sinful"—these are all considerations on the material platform. But when you are on the transcendental platform, you are automatically without sin. Kāñḍa confirms this in *Bhagavad-gētā* [14.26]:

*mād ca yo' vyabhicāreēā
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa guēān samatētyaitān
brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

The life of vice and the life of piety are within this material world, but when one is spiritually engaged, he is above the material plane, on the spiritual

plane.

So the whole thing is that if you chant the Hare Kāñëa *mahā-mantra* and give up these sinful activities, automatically you become reformed. You come to the spiritual platform. And in this way your life will become successful.

"FEEL THE ONENESS" ... WITH A DIFFERENCE

Puñña Kāñëa: This next question is rather interesting, Çréla Prabhupāda. "Is it not possible for all kinds of spiritualists—be they Advaitans [advocates of oneness of the self with God], Dvaitans [advocates of total difference between the self and God], or Viñiñöadvaitans [advocates of qualified oneness of the self with God]—come together instead of remaining isolated as warring factions?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: Yes. This is the process taught by Caitanya Mahāprabhu—to bring all the Dvaitans and Advaitans together on one platform. Everyone has to understand that he is essentially a servant of God. The Advaitan wrongly thinks that he is absolutely one with God, that he himself is God. That is wrong. How can you become God? God is *ñāḍ-aiçvarya-pürëam*, full in six opulences. He has all power, all wealth, all beauty, all fame, all knowledge, and all renunciation. So this Advaitan idea is artificial—to think you're able to become God.

The Dvaitans stress that one is utterly different from God, that God is separate from the living entity. But actually, from the *Bhagavad-gētā* we understand that the living entities are part and parcel of God. And in the *Vedas* it is said, *nityo nityānā cetanaḥ cetanānām*: both God and His creatures are living entities, though God is the chief. *Eko yo bahūnā vidadhāti kāmān*: the difference between the two is that God maintains all the other living entities. That is a fact. We are maintained, and God is the maintainer. We are predominated—we are not independent—and God is the predominator. But because the predominated living entities are part and parcel of God, in quality they are one with God.

So Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu's philosophy is *acintya-bhedābheda*: the living entities are simultaneously one with and different from the Lord. The living entity is one in the sense that he is part and parcel of God. So if God were gold, the living entity would also be gold. That is oneness in quality. But God is great, and we are minute. In that way we are different. That is why Caitanya Mahāprabhu enunciated this philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*: inconceivable, simultaneous oneness with and difference from God. That is real philosophy.

So on the platform of this philosophy, everyone can come together, if they are reasonable. If they remain unreasonably stuck up in their own concocted philosophy, then it is difficult. But it is a fact that the living entity is eternally

one with and different from God. Find this verse: *mamaivääço jéva-loke*.

Hari-sauri:

*mamaivääço jéva-loke
jéva-bhūtaù sanātanaù
manaù ñañöhänéndriyääi
prakāti-sthāni karñati*

"The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind." [Bg. 15.7]

Çréla Prabhupāda: So if the living entity is eternally a fragmental part, how can he become one with the whole? The part is never equal to the whole. That is an axiomatic truth. So it is a wrong conception to try to become equal to God. The Māyāvādés are trying to become God, but that is impossible. Let them try to become *godly*. *Godly* means "servant of God." That will make them perfect. The Vaiñëava philosophy teaches that we can remain in our natural position but act as a servant of God. That is perfect. But if the servant tries to become the master, that is artificial.

Of course, in the spiritual world there often seems to be no difference between the master and the servant. For instance, Kāñëa's friends the cowherd boys—they do not know that Kāñëa is God. They play with Him on equal terms. When Kāñëa is defeated in play, He has to take His friend on His shoulder and carry him. The friends do not know who is God and who is not God. So that is the advanced spiritual conception. Of course, the difference is always there between God and the part-and-parcel living entities, but by the influence of God's internal potency, the understanding is covered. We can attain that position after many, many lives of pious activities. That is stated in the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* [10.12.11]:

*ithaà satāà brahma-sukhānubhūtyā
dāsyāà gatānāà para-daivatena
māyāçñitānāà nara-dārakeëa
sākaà vijahruù kāta-puëya-puijāù*

The cowherd boys are playing with Kāñëa. And who is Kāñëa? He is the essence of *brahma-sukha*, spiritual bliss. He is Param Brahman, the Supreme Spirit. So the boys are playing with Param Brahman, though to an ordinary man He appears to be an ordinary child. how have the cowherd boys gotten the position of being able to play with Kāñëa? *Kāta-puëya-puijāù*: After many, many lives of pious activities, they have gotten the position of playing with Kāñëa on equal terms.

So this is the conception of pure devotional service—that when you go to Goloka Vāndāvana, Kāñëa's abode, you love Kāñëa so much that you will not distinguish between the Supreme Lord and His subordinates. The inhabitants of Kāñëa's abode have such unflinching love for Kāñëa. That is Vāndāvana life. The cows, the calves, the trees, the flowers, the water, the elderly men,

Kāñëa's parents Nanda Mahārāja and Yaçodāmayé—everyone is intensely attached to Kāñëa. Everyone's central point is Kāñëa. Everyone is loving Kāñëa so much that they do not know He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Sometimes the residents of Våndāvana see Kāñëa's wonderful activities and think, "Kāñëa must be some demigod who has come here." They never recognize that Kāñëa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead—or if they do, Kāñëa makes them immediately forget. When Kāñëa manifested His pastimes on earth some five thousands years ago, He passed through many dangerous situations—so many demons were coming—and mother Yaçodā would chant *mantras* to protect Kāñëa, thinking, "He may not be put into some calamity." Kāñëa's family and friends never understood that Kāñëa is God. Their natural love for Kāñëa was so intense. Therefore Våndāvana life is so exalted. As Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught, *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeña-tanayas tad-dhāma våndāvanam*: First of all, Kāñëa—Vrajendra-nandana, the son of Nanda Mahārāja—is *ārādhyā*, worshipable. Then, *tad-dhāma våndāvanam*: His *dhāma*, or abode—Våndāvana—is equally worshipable.

So these facts pertain to a higher standard of understanding. Only a devotee can understand that to become one with God is not a sublime idea. In Våndāvana the devotees want to become the father or mother of God—to control God with love. This fact the Māyāvādés, or Advaitavādés, cannot understand. Only pure devotees can understand these things. What is the benefit of becoming one with God?

Even other Vaiñëava philosophies cannot explain the higher relationships with God, which Caitanya Mahāprabhu explained. These are *vatsalya-rasa* [parenthood], and *madhurya-rasa* [conjugal love]. Caitanya Mahāprabhu especially taught that our relationship with Kāñëa can be in conjugal love, *madhurya-rasa*.

But as for our general understanding, Lord Caitanya introduced the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*—simultaneously one with and different from the Lord. That is explained by Kāñëa in *Bhagavad-gētā* [15.7]: *mamaivāṇṇo ... jēva-bhūtaù*—the living entities are part and parcel of God. So we are one with God, since we have God's qualities in minute degree. But God is the master, and we are always subordinate. *Eko bahūnā yo vidadhāti kāmān*: we are protected, we are maintained, we are predominated. That is our position. We cannot attain the position of predominator. That is not possible.

HOW TO LOVE GOD

Puñña Kāñëa: Next question, Çréla Prabhupāda. "As the world is coming to be divided into just two classes—atheist and theist—is it not advisable for all

religions to come together? And what positive steps can be taken in this direction?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: The steps to be taken have already been explained—this Kāñëa consciousness movement. The atheist class and the theist class will always exist. This is the nature of the material world. Even at home—the father may be an atheist like Hiraëyakaçipu, and the son a theist like Prahlaäa. So atheists and theists will always exist—in the family, in the community, in the nation.

But the theists should follow the instructions of the *Bhagavad-gétä* and take shelter at Kāñëa's lotus feet, giving up other, so-called religious principles. That will bring religious unity. Religion without a clear conception of God is humbug, bogus. Religion means to accept the order of God. So if you have no clear conception of God, if you do not know who God is, there is no question of accepting His order. Find this verse in the Sixth Canto of Çrémad-Bhägavatam: *dharmaà tu säkñäd bhagavat-praëétam* [SB 6.3.19].

Hari-sauri:

*dharmaà tu säkñäd bhagavat-praëétam
na vai vidur añäyo näpi deväù
na siddha-mukhyä asurä manuñyäu
kuto nu vidyädhara-cäraëädayau*
[SB 6.3.19]

"Real religious principles are enacted by . . ."

Çréla Prabhupāda: Ah. "Real." Go on.

Hari-sauri: "Real religious principles are enacted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although fully situated in the mode of goodness, even the great sages who occupy the topmost planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods or the leaders of Siddhaloka, to say nothing of the demons, ordinary human beings, Vidyädhara, and Cäraëas." [Bhäg. 6.3.19]

Çréla Prabhupāda: Hm. Read the next verses also.

Hari-sauri:

*svayambhür näradaù çaàbhuù
kumäraù kapilo manuù
prahlädo janako bhéñmo
balir vaiyäsakir vayam*
[SB 6.3.20]

*dvädaçaita vijänémo
dharmaà bhägavataà bhaöüù
guhyaà viçuddhaà durbodhaà
yaj jüätvämatam açnute*

"Lord Brahmä, Bhagavän Närada, Lord Çiva, the four Kumäras, Lord Kapila [the son of Devahüti], Svayämbhuva Manu, Prahlaäa Mahäräja, Janaka Mahäräja, Bhéñmadeva, Bali Mahäräja, Çukadeva Gosvämé, and I myself

[Yamarāja] know the real religious principle. My dear servants, this transcendental religious principle, which is known as *bhāgavata-dharma*, or surrender unto the Supreme Lord and love for Him, is uncontaminated by the material modes of nature. This transcendental religious principle is very confidential and difficult for ordinary human beings to understand, but if by chance one fortunately understands it, he is immediately liberated, and thus he returns home, back to Godhead."

Çréla Prabhupāda: So these *mahājanas*—Brahmā, Nārada, Lord Çiva, and so on—they know what the principles of religion are. Religion means *bhāgavata-dharma*, understanding God and our relationship with God. That is religion. You may call it "Hindu religion" or "Muslim religion" or "Christian religion," but in any case, real religion is that which teaches how to love God. *Sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokñaje*: [SB 1.2.6] if by following some religious system you come to the platform of loving God, then your religious system is perfect. Otherwise, it is simply a waste of time—bogus religion, without a clear conception of God. So we have to understand what God is and what He says, and we have to abide by His orders. Then there is real religion, there is real understanding of God, and everything is complete.

Puñña Kāññā: Çréla Prabhupāda, one may ask why someone like Christ or Moses is not mentioned among the *mahājanas*.

Çréla Prabhupāda: There are *mahājanas* among the Christian saints. They include Christ, and in addition to Christ, so many others—St. Matthew, St. Thomas, and so forth. These *mahājanas* are mentioned in the Bible. A *mahājana* is one who strictly follows the original religion and knows things as they are. And that means he must be coming in the *paramparā*, the system of disciplic succession.

For instance, Arjuna learned *Bhagavad-gētā* directly from Kāññā. Therefore Arjuna is a *mahājana*. So you should learn from Arjuna. You follow the way Arjuna acted and the way Arjuna understood Kāññā. Then *mahājano yena gataū sa panthāu*: you are following the *mahājana*—you are on the real path. Just as we are.

in these verses from *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* is a list of *mahājanas*, including Svāyambhu, or Lord Brahmā. So this *sampradāya* of ours is called the Brahma-sampradāya. Our *sampradāya* also includes Nārada, another *mahājana*. Sambhu, or Lord Siva, is still another *mahājana*. He has his own *sampradāya*, the Rudra-sampradāya. And similarly, Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, has the Çré-sampradāya.

So we must belong to one these *sampradāyas*. *Sampradāya-vihinā ye mantrās te nirphalā matāu*: if you do not belong to a bona fide *sampradāya*, originating from a *mahājana*, then your religious process is useless. You cannot concoct some religious system. So whether you follow the Christian *mahājanas* or the Vedic *mahājanas*, it doesn't matter. But you have to follow the *mahājanas*. If a Christian says, "I don't believe in St. Thomas," what kind of Christian is he? It doesn't matter which *mahājana* we are discussing. The real *mahājana* is he who is strictly following the principles enunciated by God. Then he is following a real religious system. Otherwise, there is no question of religion.

The so-called follower is simply a *mano-dharmé*, a mental speculator. Mental speculation is not religion. Religion is the order of God, and one who follows that order—he is religious. That's all.

Puñña Kāñhā: Then as far as I can understand, Çréla Prabhupāda, you're saying that there's no need to maintain sectarian labels, that there's one religion in the world.

Çréla Prabhupāda: One religion exists already: how to love God. This is the one religion. Will the Christians say, "No, we don't want to love God"? Will the Muhammadans say, "No, no, we don't want to love God"? So religion means how to love God, and any religion which teaches how to love God—that is perfect. It doesn't matter whether you are Christian or Muslim or Hindu.

Dharmaà tu sākñād bhagavat-praëetam: [SB 6.3.19] "Real religion is directly enunciated by Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead." So, Bhagavān, Lord Kāñhā, says, "surrender unto Me." Of course, you cannot surrender until you love. For instance, you are surrendered to me. Even though I am not from your country, because you have love for me, you surrender. If I say, "do this," you'll do it. Why? Because you love me. So when will there be surrender to God? When one loves God—when one reaches the platform where he thinks, "O Lord, I love You; I can sacrifice everything for You." That is the basic principle of religion.

Therefore, that religion is perfect which teaches its followers how to love God. So let everyone come to this platform of loving God. That is Kāñhā consciousness. We are teaching nothing but how to love God, how to sacrifice everything for God. That is real religion. Otherwise, it is all a bogus waste of time, simply a following of ritualistic ceremonies. That is not religion. That is superfluous. As stated in the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* [1.2.8],

*dharmau svanuñöhitaù puàsà
viñvaksena kathäsu yaù
notpādayed yadi ratiā
çrama eva hi kevalam*

"You are very good; you are following your religious principles very strictly. That's all right—but what about your love of God?" "Oh, that I do not know." So, the *Bhāgavatam* says, *çrama eva hi kevalam*: "Your religion is simply a waste of time—simply laboring. That's all. If you have not learned how to love God, then what is the meaning of your religion?"

But when you're actually on the platform of love of God, you understand your relationship with God: "I am part and parcel of God—and this dog is also part and parcel of God. And so is every other living entity." Then you'll extend your love to the animals also. If you actually love God, then your love for insects is also there, because you understand, "This insect has got a different kind of body, but he is also part and parcel of God—he is my brother." *Samaù sarveñu bhūteñu*: you look upon all living beings equally. Then you cannot maintain slaughterhouses. If you maintain slaughterhouses and disobey the order of Christ in the Bible—"Thou shall not kill"—and you proclaim yourself

a Christian, your so-called religion is simply a waste of time. *Çrama eva hi kevalam*: your going to the church and everything is simply a waste of time, because you have no love for God. That foolishness is going on all over the world. People are stamping themselves with some sectarian label, but there is no real religion.

So if all people are to come together on one platform, they have to accept the principles of *Bhagavad-gétä*. The first principle is that Kåñëa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If you do not accept in the beginning that Kåñëa is the Supreme Lord, then try to understand this gradually. That is education. You can begin by accepting that there is *somebody* who is supreme.

Now, if I say, "Kåñëa is the Supreme Lord," you may say, "Why is Kåñëa the Supreme Lord? Kåñëa is Indian." No. He is God. For example, the sun rises first over India, then over Europe. But that does not mean the European sun is different from the Indian sun. Similarly, although Kåñëa appeared in India, now He has come to the Western countries through this Kåñëa consciousness movement.

So you should try to understand whether Kåñëa is God or not. But He is God. There is no doubt about it. If you have the intelligence to understand what God is, then try to understand. But Kåñëa is God, undoubtedly. So take to Kåñëa consciousness and abide by the order of Kåñëa. Then everyone can come together on the same religious platform. One religion, Kåñëa consciousness.

Puñña Kåñëa: Çréla Prabhupāda, sometimes in our preaching activities we meet people who claim to be very devout Christians or Muslims but at the same time blaspheme Kåñëa. Is it possible that such persons can actually be associates of God?

Çréla Prabhupāda: No. If one is serious about understanding what God is, then he will accept Kåñëa as the Supreme Lord. Once he knows what God is, he'll understand, "Here is God—Kåñëa." If he remains in darkness and does not learn what God is, then how will he understand Kåñëa? He'll understand Kåñëa as one of us. That's all. But if he knows what God is, then he'll understand about Kåñëa: "Yes, here is God."

For instance, if a person knows what gold is, then anywhere he comes upon gold, he'll understand, "Here is gold." He won't think gold is available in one shop only. And if a person knows what God is, what the meaning of "God" is, then in Kåñëa he will find God in fullness. *Kåñëas tu bhagavān svayam*: "Kåñëa Himself is the Supreme Personality of Godhead." The *çāstra* explains what Bhagavān, or God, is, and how Kåñëa is Bhagavān. You should understand and see from the activities of Kåñëa whether He is or is not Bhagavān. It requires a good brain to understand. If I say, "Here is God," now it is up to you to test my statement. If you know what God is, then test my statement about Kåñëa, and then you'll accept Him as God. If you do not know how to test my statement, then you may refuse to accept it. That is another thing. You may also accept iron as gold. That is your ignorance: you do not know what gold is. But if you actually know what God is, you will accept Kåñëa as God. There is no doubt about it.

So this is the common platform—*Bhagavad-gétā*. Everyone, come and take to Kāñëa consciousness. Understand God and learn how to love Him, and your life will be perfect.

Puñña Kāñëa: But many people claim to have the best religion, Çréla Prabhupāda.

Çréla Prabhupāda: But we have to look at the result. how will we decide what is real religion? *Sa vai puàsàà paro dharmaù yato bhaktir adhokñaje*: by seeing whether the followers have learned how to love God. If one has no love of God, then what is the use of claiming that one's religion is the best? Where is the sign of love of Godhead? That is to be seen. Everyone will say, "My understanding is the best." But there must be practical proof.

If someone claims to have the best religion, we ask, "Tell us how to love God. What is your process of loving God? If you do not know your relationship with God and others' relationship with God, then how can you love God?" That process of loving God is lacking. Nobody can give a clear conception of God. If you have no understanding of what God is, where is the question of love? Love is not mere fantasy or imagination. You cannot love air. You love a person, a beautiful person. If you merely say, "I love the air, I love the sky," what question is there of love? There must be a person. So who is that person we want to love?

Unfortunately, most people have no personal conception of God. Nor can they describe the Lord's personal beauty, knowledge, strength —His fullness in the six personal opulences. There is no such description. They have some conception of God, but actually they do not know what God is. But religion means you must know God and love Him. Love is something tangible. It is not merely fantasy or imagination. So we Kāñëa conscious people accept Kāñëa as God, and we are worshiping Kāñëa, and we are making progress.

Puñña Kāñëa: Recently a priest visited us and admitted that he didn't know what God looks like. He couldn't say anything about God, but he said he loved God.

Çréla Prabhupāda: Then? What kind of love is it?

Puñña Kāñëa: Nor did he say his people were very enthusiastic about coming to church. He said, "At best they come once a week." He said that's all that is necessary.

Çréla Prabhupāda: Well, love does not mean that you come once a week to my house. Love means you come to my house every day, give me some present, and take something from me. Çréla Rūpa Gosvāmé describes the symptoms of love in his

*Upadeñāmāta [4]
dadāti pratigāhëāti
guhyam ākhyāti pācchati
bhuikte bhojayate caiva
ñàd-vidhàà prëti-lakñāëam*

If you love somebody, you must give him something, and you must accept something from him. You must disclose your mind to him, and he should

disclose his mind to you. And you should give him some eatable, and whatever eatable thing he offers, you accept. These six kinds of exchange develop love.

But if you do not even know the person, then where is the question of love? Suppose you love some boy or some girl, then you will give some present, and he or she gives you some present—that develops love. You give something to eat, and whatever he or she gives you to eat, you eat. You disclose your mind: "My dear such-and-such, I love you. This is my ambition." And he or she makes some disclosure. These are the exchanges of love. But if there is no person-to-person meeting, where is the question of love? If I claim to love somebody, but I visit his house only once a week and ask, "Please give me such-and-such," where is the exchange of love? Love means there is some exchange. If you love somebody but you have not given anything to that person or taken anything from him, where is the love? The conclusion is, religion means to love God, and that means you must know who God is. There is no alternati You must know the person who is God. Then you can have loving exchanges with Him. That we are teaching. We are asking our disciples to rise early in the morning and offer *maṅgala āratī*, then *bhoga āratī*, to the Lord in His form as the Deity in the temple. Are we such fools and rascals that we are wasting time worshipping a "doll"? Sometimes people think like that. But that is not a fact. When you enter the temple, you know definitely, "Here is Kāñṇēa. He is God, and we must love Him like this." That is the superexcellence of this Kāñṇēa consciousness movement. We do everything definitely, on the positive platform. Is that clear? Does anyone have any further question?

Pradyumna: Ṣréla Prabhupāda, you're saying we must know God before we can love Him. So that means devotional service is preceded by knowledge.

Ṣréla Prabhupāda: Yes, that is the process given in the *Bhagavad-gētā*. There are eighteen chapters, and the whole eighteen chapters are education—how to know God. When Arjuna at last comes to complete awareness, he accepts, "Kāñṇēa, You are *paraà brahma*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Then Arjuna surrendered, as Kāñṇēa advised—*sarva-dharmān parityajya* [Bg. 18.66]. But unless you know God, how will you surrender? If some third-class man comes and says, "Surrender to me," will you do that? "Why should I surrender to you?" You must know, "Now, here is God. I must surrender." Eighteen chapters describe God and how to know God, and then Kāñṇēa proposes, "Surrender unto Me." Then Arjuna does it: "Yes." So without knowing God, how can you surrender to Him? It is not possible.

So the *Bhagavad-gētā* is the science of how to know God. The preliminary science. If you want to know more, then read *Ṣrémad-Bhāgavatam*. And if you are in intense love with God, read *Caitanya-caritāmāta*—how your love for God can be still more intensified. That is *Caitanya-caritāmāta*. So *Bhagavad-gētā* is the preliminary book: to understand God and surrender. And from the surrendering point, further progress—that is *Ṣrémad-Bhāgavatam*. And when the love is intense, to make it more intensified—that is *Caitanya-caritāmāta*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was mad after God. He cried, *ṣṇyāyitam jagat sarvaà*

govinda viraheëa me: "I find everything vacant without Kāñëa." That is the supreme ecstasy.

So these things cannot happen without love. If you love somebody and he's not there, you find everything vacant. So Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu felt this way about Kāñëa—lover and beloved. *Çünyāyitaà jagat sarvaà govinda viraheëa me*: "I see everything vacant without Govinda." That is the supreme stage of love. Is that clear or not?

Pradyumna: There's just one more thing, Çréla Prabhupāda. What's the minimum knowledge one must have to . . .

Çréla Prabhupāda: God is great. That's all. God is great. Kāñëa proved that He's great. Therefore He's God. Everyone says, "God is great." *Allah-u-akbar*, the Muslims say: "God is great." And Hindus say, *paraà brahma*: "You are the Supreme Spirit." So God is great. And when Kāñëa was present, He proved that He is all-great. Therefore He's God. If you accept that God is great, and if you find somebody who is great in everything, then He is God. How can you deny it? You can see how great Kāñëa is simply by considering His *Bhagavad-gétä*. Five thousand years have passed since Kāñëa spoke *Bhagavad-gétä*, and still it is accepted as the greatest book of knowledge all over the world. Even people from other religions who are really learned accept it. That is proof of the greatness of Kāñëa—this knowledge. Who can give such knowledge? That is the proof that He is God. Kāñëa has all opulences in full, including knowledge. Other than here in Kāñëa's words, where is such knowledge throughout the whole world? Every line is sublime knowledge. If you study *Bhagavad-gétä* scrutinizingly, you'll understand that Kāñëa is the Supreme Lord.

THE WAY TO PEACE

Puñöa Kāñëa: Next question, Çréla Prabhupāda. "Do you envision a different role for the Vedic culture in the Western countries, where the influence of other great religions has been felt for centuries?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: No. There is no "different role." God is one. God cannot be two. As Kāñëa states in the *Bhagavad-gétä* [7.7], *mattaù parataraà nänyat küicid asti dhanaijaya*: "There is no authority superior to Me." That is God. Now people have to understand that Kāñëa is God. There is no "different role" for the Vedic culture. The role is the same worldwide. Five thousand years ago, Kāñëa said, "I am the supreme authority. There is no authority superior to Me." He is still so. Therefore we are simply attempting to introduce Kāñëa. Previously nobody attempted to introduce the supreme authority, Kāñëa, all over the world. We are just trying to introduce Kāñëa, following the orders of Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who appeared five hundred years ago. He is Kāñëa, and He wanted this Kāñëa consciousness to be spread all over the

world:

*pāthivéte āche yata nagarādi-grāma
sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*

"In every town and village throughout the world," said Lord Caitanya, "the chanting of My holy name will be heard." Kāñēa is not just for India. He is for everyone, because He is God. In *Bhagavad-gētā* He affirms, *ahaà béja-pradaù pitā*: "I am the seed-giving father of all living entities"—not just the living entities in the human society, but also all other living entities, like the aquatics, the insects, the plants, the birds, and the beasts.

Everything is there in the Vedic culture, but this culture of Kāñēa consciousness, which is summarized in *Bhagavad-gētā* *As It Is*, had not been preached properly. Everyone had interpreted *Bhagavad-gētā* in his own way, to satisfy his own whims. We are just trying for the first time to present *Bhagavad-gētā* as it is, and it is becoming effective. So this is not a "different role" for the Vedic culture. It is the actual role. Nobody had tried for it; therefore Kāñēa had been unknown in the Western countries. But even though we have been attempting to introduce Him for only a few years, still, because it is reality, Kāñēa consciousness is being accepted. So it is not a new role for the Vedic culture. The role is already there—to preach Kāñēa consciousness.

That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's vision. He says especially to people born in India,

*bhārata-bhūmite manunīya-janma haila yāra
janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra*
[Cc. *Ādi* 9.41]

"Anyone who has taken his birth as a human being in India, Bhāratavarña, should make his life successful and work for the upliftment of the whole world." Indians are meant for this business—for the upliftment of the whole world—because all over the world people are unaware of Kāñēa. So anyone who is born in India should attempt to broadcast the message of *Bhagavad-gētā* and Kāñēa. That is the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

This is not a new role for the Vedic culture. The role is already there. Five hundred years ago, Caitanya Mahāprabhu spoke of it. But all the various swamis and yogis who came here—they never introduced Kāñēa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now it is being done, and people are accepting, naturally. This is the Kāñēa consciousness movement.

So if everyone joins—either Indian or non-Indian—in this movement, there will be one religion and there will be peace. Peace will prevail. This is the only way.

*bhoktāraà yajña-tapasāà
sarva-loka-maheçvaram
suhādaà sarva-bhūtānāà
jīatvā māà çāntim ācchati*

"A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries." This is the way to attain *çānti*, peace. Understand Kāñëa—that He is the supreme enjoyer, the supreme proprietor, and the supreme friend of everyone. "Accept Kāñëa as your friend. You'll be happy." This is the message of Kāñëa consciousness.

RETURN TO REAL LIFE

Puñña Kāñëa: Çréla Prabhupāda, the final question is: "What is your view regarding proselytizing or preaching?"

Çréla Prabhupāda: We are simply attempting to bring people to the real understanding. Kāñëa says, *mamaivāñço jéva-bhūtaù*: [15.7] all living entities are part and parcel of Me. He says, *sarva-yoniñu kaunteya* [Bg. 14.4] ... *ahaà béja-pradaù*: "Of all forms of life, I am the seed-giving father." In other words, the natural position is that every living entity—animals, plants, and human beings, including Indians, Americans, Czechs—everyone is part and parcel of Kāñëa.

So our Kāñëa consciousness movement is not a process of trying to convince people of some speculative idea. This movement is actually bringing people to their real position—that they're all part and parcel of Kāñëa. It is not artificial proselytizing: "You are Christian; now become a Hindu." It is not like that. This movement is actually bringing people back to their natural position—part and parcel of God.

The effects of artificial proselytizing will not stand. But when one comes to the real understanding of his position, then that will continue. This Kāñëa consciousness movement is that real understanding—bringing everyone back to his original position. At the present moment everyone is in a diseased condition: people are thinking they are something other than servants of Kāñëa. Now this movement is trying to bring everyone to the position of recognizing that they are eternal servants of Kāñëa.

This movement is not some kind of rubber-stamp proselytizing—"You were Christian; now you are Hindu." After all, if one does not know what his position is, what benefit will he derive by simply being stamped "Hindu"?

Puñña Kāñëa: No benefit. He'll still be in ignorance of his real, spiritual identity.

Çréla Prabhupāda: If you keep someone on the ignorant platform, then what is the benefit of making a Christian or a Muslim into a Hindu? No, artificially changing someone into a Hindu will not help. One must know the philosophy

of life. One must know what God is. One must learn how to love God. That is real life.

1çruti-smâti-puräëdi-
païcarâtra-vidhià vinä
aikântiké harer bhaktir
utpâtäyaiva kalpate

“Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upaniñads, Puräëas and Nārada-païcarâtra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.” Bhakti-rasāmāta-sindhu 1.2.101

2çruti-smâti-puräëdi-
païcarâtra-vidhià vinä
aikântiké harer bhaktir
utpâtäyaiva kalpate

“Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upaniñads, Puräëas and Nārada-païcarâtra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.” Bhakti-rasāmāta-sindhu 1.2.101

3In the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* it is said:

artho 'yaà brahma-sūtrāëää
bhāratārtha-vinirēayaù
gāyatrē-bhāñya-rūpo 'sau
vedārtha-paribāāhitaù
grantho 'ñöädaça-sāhasraù
çrémad-bhāgavatābhidhaù

“The Çrémad-Bhāgavatam is the authorized explanation of Brahma-sūtra, and it is a further explanation of Mahābhārata. It is the expansion of the gāyatrē mantra and the essence of all Vedic knowledge. This Çrémad-Bhāgavatam, containing eighteen thousand verses, is known as the explanation of all Vedic literature.”

4tad-vijñānārthaà sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāëiù çrotriyāà brahma-niñöham

“To understand these things properly, one must humbly approach, with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the Vedas and firmly

devoted to the Absolute Truth.”
[Muëðaka Upaniñad 1.2.12]

